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SALAR

DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

ساڈھ روزنامہ بنگلور

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US attacks ISIS targets in Syria

WASHINGTON, JAN 11

The US has launched another round of retaliatory strikes against the Islamic State in Syria after last month's ambush that killed two US soldiers and one American civilian interpreter in the country. The large-scale strikes, conducted by the US along with partners, occurred at around 12.30 pm ET, the US Central Command said. The strikes hit alleged Islamic State targets across Syria. The Jordanian military later announced that it had taken part in the strikes. ***— PTI***

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Shah warns of emerging threats in Kerala

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, 11 JAN

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday warned that Kerala's law and order situation may look calm now, but " threats are slowly emerging" that could become dangerous in the future. Speaking at a conclave organised by Kerala Kaumudi daily, he questioned the role of some organisations and asked whether they could truly keep people safe. "Can organisations like the PFI, Jamaat-e-Islami, and parties like the SDPI keep Kerala safe?" Referring to the ban on the Popular Front of India (PFI), Shah said both the LDF and the UDF had neither opposed nor supported the decision. ***— PTI***

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Bengaluru armywoman wins UN award

BENGALURU, 11 JAN

Major Swathi Shantha Kumar, a 31-year-old from Bengaluru serving with the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), has received the UN Secretary-General's Award 2025 for her project 'Equal Partners, Lasting Peace'. She was recognised for her strategic efforts creating a secure environment for 5,000 women, enabling their participation in local peace dialogues, the UN announced. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres praised her initiative, which was selected as the winner in the 'Gender Category' through a global UN-wide voting process. Leading an Indian Engagement Team, Major Swathi strengthened grassroots security and community confidence by conducting extensive patrols, including riverine and air missions in remote areas. Her project set a new gender parity benchmark by integrating female peacekeepers into frontline duties. ***—AGENCIES***

The pre-budget meeting charied by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman ***PHOTO: X @FINMININDIA***

States flag revenue loss after GST cuts

At pre-budget meet, Oppn states flag G Ram G

NEW DELHI, 11 JAN

- The Union Budget Session will commence on 28 January and conclude on 2 April, as states will seek to gain more assistance from the Centre

Several states flagged revenue losses due to GST rationalisation at a pre-budget meeting.

At a meeting chaired by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in New Delhi on Saturday, several states also sought simplified conditions for capital spending and 50-year loans, renewed focus on investment promotion, developmental priorities while flagging certain borrowing curbs.

Opposition-ruled states like Karnataka, Punjab and Telangana demanded additional resources from the Centre in the 2026-27 Budget, and said that the 60:40 cost-sharing under the proposed VB-G RAM G scheme will impose further fiscal burden on already strained resources of the states. The opposition-ruled states said the changes to MGNREGA will weaken the employment guarantee and are against the spirit of cooperative federalism.

The Parliament had last month passed the Viksit Bharat Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) (VB-G RAM G) Bill, replacing the 20-year-old Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA). Under the VB G RAM G scheme, 60 per cent of the scheme cost will be borne by the Centre, and 40 per cent by the states, as against the 90:10 ratio under MGNREGA.

Karnataka also called for sharing of excise duty on tobacco and cess on pan masala.

Goa sought a more equitable Centre-state funding pattern under centrally sponsored schemes, taking into account Goa's coastal challenges, Western Ghats ecology, and national tourism responsibilities.

Arunachal Pradesh requested that the Centre to support the state's key infrastructure projects, while the Odisha government has demanded support from the Centre for development of roads and National Highways (NHs) projects in the state involving an investment of Rs 41,580 crore.

Haryana's key demands included an increased allocation agriculture, rural development, medical education, industries, and allied sectors.

The meeting was attended by the Governor of Manipur; Chief Ministers of Delhi, Goa, Haryana, Jammu and Kashmir, Meghalaya, and Sikkim; Deputy Chief Ministers of Arunachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Rajasthan and Telangana. *—Agencies*

Iran protest toll crosses 500 as US threats grow

DUBAI, 11 JAN

At least 500 people people have died in violence surrounding the protests in Iran, activists said, with fears the death toll is far higher.

Nationwide protests challenging Iran's theocracy saw protesters flood the streets in the country's capital and its second-largest city into on Sunday, as the demonstrations crossed the two-week mark.

The US-based Human Rights Activists News Agency, which relies on activists in Iran cross-checking information, offered the new death toll of 538 on Sunday, a large jump. Of those killed, 490 are protesters and 48 are members of the security forces. The agency also acknowledged receiving claims of far more deaths that it was still assessing as over 10,600 others have been arrested.

The internet and phone lines remain cut in Iran.

US President Donald Trump offered support for the protesters, while reports suggest that the US and Israeli armies are building up around Iran. Trump had earlier said that he would strike Iran if it killed protesters, but ruled out boots on the ground.

Iran's reformist President Masoud Pezeshkian has offered to negotiate with the protesters.

"People have concerns, we should sit with them and if it is our duty, we should resolve their concerns," Pezeshkian said. "But the higher duty is not to allow a group of rioters to come and destroy the entire society."

However, the theocracy has been clamping down on dissent, with videos purporting to show security officials indiscriminately firing at crowds. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 6

Trump briefed on striking Iran; Israel on alert

US President Donald Trump has been briefed recently on a range of military options to target Iran. The options include targeted strikes on select sites in Tehran, including non-military infrastructure linked to the regime's internal security apparatus. Meanwhile, the Israeli has been put on high alert amid the possibility of the strikes.

The President of the United States declared that if the Iranian government did this or that, he would side with the rioters. If he is so competent, let him manage his own country then... Iran will not back down in the face of those who sow destruction.

—Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran's Supreme Leader

Protesters dancing and cheering around a bonfire during Iran's massive protests; a man holds a photo of Iran's exiled Crown Prince Reza Pahlavi in Tehran ***PHOTOSS: PTI***

Three arrested in Hubballi for raping, circulating videos

HUBBALLI, 11 JAN

Two men have been arrested for allegedly raping a 35-year-old woman. Police learned of the incident after members of the public reported the photos and videos being circulated. A third person who circulated photos and videos of the incident has also been arrested, police said. The woman is currently stable and undergoing medical examination.

Police registered a case under rape and IT Act provisions, naming Shivanand and Ganesh for the alleged rape and Pradeep for circulating the videos. All three have been arrested and lodged in Shivamogga jail, Hubballi-Dharwad Police Commissioner N Shashi Kumar said.

Kumar said that on the night of 9 January, between 11.30 pm and midnight, the woman was allegedly taken from Ambedkar Ground in an auto-rickshaw. "The two men misbehaved with her, made physical contact, and allegedly forced her to consume alcohol. They took photos and videos before dropping her back at Ambedkar Ground," Kumar reported.

Police initially registered a case on their own as the victim's identity was unknown. An inquiry revealed that she had been staying near temples in different parts of the city for the past one-and-a-half months, and a formal complaint was recorded after she was traced, the commissioner said. The woman had arrived in Hubballi approximately one and a half months prior from another district, following a dispute with her husband. *—PTI*

I-PAC RAIDS: ED MOVES SC ALLEGING INTERFERENCE BY MAMATA

NEW DELHI, 11 JAN

The Enforcement Directorate has moved the Supreme Court alleging interference and obstruction by the West Bengal government, including Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, during its search operations at the I-PAC office and the residence of its director Pratik Jain in a money laundering probe linked to an alleged coal pilferage scam.

The ED alleged Banerjee entered the raid sites, removed "key" physical documents and electronic devices, and intimidated officers, thereby compromising the agency's ability to function independently. It claimed repeated non-cooperation by the state administration and sought directions for a Central Bureau of Investigation inquiry, arguing that a neutral central agency was required.

The West Bengal government has filed a caveat in the apex court, seeking to ensure that no order is passed without hearing its side.

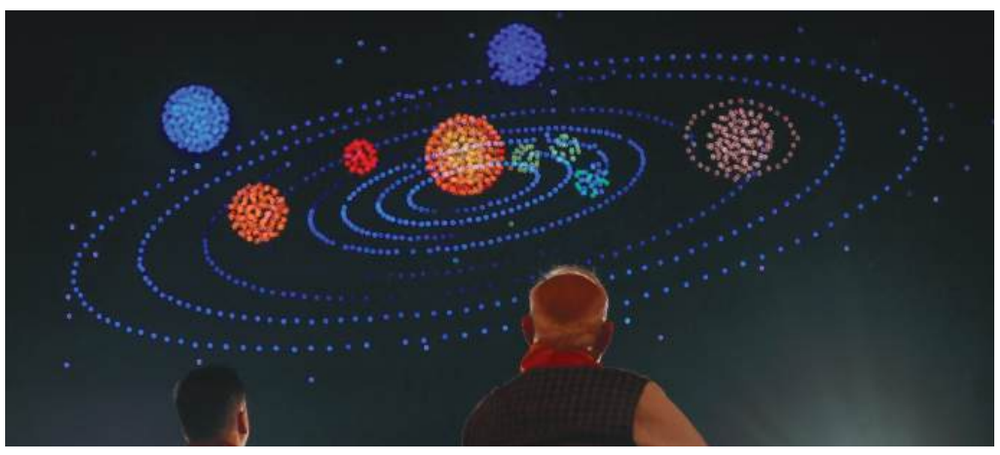
According to sources, the ED's plea is likely to be mentioned for urgent hearing on Monday.

Earlier, the ED had approached the Calcutta High Court on 9 January seeking a CBI probe, but the matter was adjourned amid courtroom commotion and listed for 14 January.

The controversy stems from 8 January searches at I-PAC premises, during which Banerjee arrived with senior Trinamool Congress leaders and accused the agency of overreach.

The party disputes allegations. *—PTI*

TEMPLE OF THE MOON



Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited the Somnath temple in Gujarat on Sunday, a thousand year old structure dedicate to Shiva, where he declared that amid global uncertainty, India witnessing unprecedented certainty ***PHOTO: X @NARENDRAMODI*** ***>>>MORE ON PAGE 4***

Mamkootathil arrested in 3rd sexual assault case

PATHANAMTHITTA, 11 JAN

Expelled Congress MLA Rahul Mamkootathil was arrested in a sexual assault case after being taken into custody from Palakkad in the early hours on Sunday. Police said a third sexual assault case was registered against him based on the complainant's statement on 8 January.

The complainant, a Kottayam native now living in Canada, alleged that Mamkootathil raped her at Thiruvalla Hotel in April 2024 after promising marriage. Police said that when the woman became pregnant, Mamkootathil refused responsibility and instead pressured her to get an abortion.

Psolice kept Mamkootathil under surveillance and took him into custody from a hotel around midnight. The Special Investigation Team (SIT), which is already probing Mamkootathil's two earlier sexual assault cases, have been assigned the latest case. He was remanded to judicial custody. On Monday, the court is scheduled to consider both the SIT's plea for custody and his bail petition. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 3

Centre asks manufactures to share phone source codes

NEW DELHI, 11 JAN

In a significant move aimed at addressing the challenges posed in securing user data, the Centre is asking mobile phone manufacturers to share their source code with the government, Reuters reported.

The move comes amid the government's effort to deal with the rise in online fraud and data breaches.

As part of the initiative, the IT and Electronics Ministry has begun discussions on safety standards in mobile phones and other communication devices from the telecom department to meet requirements under a telecom security assurance norm, official sources said here.

India Cellular and Electronics Association (ICEA) Chairman Pankaj Mohindroo said, "This is a routine process of an open, transparent consultation. We are satisfied with the way the discussions are proceeding. There is no pressing concern."

ICEA represents companies like Apple, Vivo, Xiaomi, Dixon, etc.

Sources said that the IT ministry is holding discussions with stakeholders under the Indian Telecom Security Assurance Requirements (ITSAR), which was framed by the National Centre for Communication Security (NCCS) under the Department of Telecommunications (DoT). *—Agencies*

ISRO begins countdown for PSLV-C62 mission

SRIHARIKOTA, 11 JAN

ISRO on Sunday began a 22.5-hour countdown for the launch of PSLV-C62, marking the space agency's first mission of the year, which will place an Earth Observation Satellite along with 14 co-passenger satellites into orbit.

The mission is being undertaken by NewSpace India Ltd (NSIL), ISRO's commercial arm, with the co-passenger satellites belonging to domestic and international customers.

The lift-off of the 260tonne rocket has been rescheduled to 10.18hrs on 12 January from the earlier 10.17hrs, ISRO said.

PSLV has completed 63 flights so far, ISRO said Sunday. *—PTI*

600 ACCOUNTS DELETED

X falls in line, complies with India on obscene AI content

NEW DELHI, 11 JAN

Microblogging site X has accepted its mistake and assured it will comply with Indian laws after the IT Ministry warned the Elon Musk-led social media platform on the Grok AI obscene content issue.

Stating this, the government sources here on Sunday said, around 3,500 pieces of content have been blocked, and over 600 accounts have been deleted.

X has accepted its mistake, and said it will comply with Indian laws, sources said, adding that in future, the platform will not allow obscene imagery.

PHOTO: X

Earlier, the government had asked X for details, including specific action taken to remove obscene content linked to Grok AI, and measures to prevent a repeat in future, after it found the platform's response to be inadequate.

In its response after the first notice was issued to it, X had outlined the strict content takedown policies it abides by when it comes to misleading posts and those related to non-consensual sexualised images.

X's Safety handle, last Sunday, said it takes action against illegal content on its platform, including Child Sexual Abuse Material by removing it, permanently suspending accounts, and working with local governments and law enforcement as necessary. *—PTI*

Six arrested for illegally ferrying cattle

VIJAYANAGARA, 11 JAN

Rural Police have apprehended six individuals following the discovery of 67 cattle being illegally transported in two container trucks near Kotaginall Cross on the Hospet–Balari highway during the early hours of Saturday. The arrested have been identified as Talahat, K.P. Dinesh, and Salim from Wayanad district of Kerala, Ramesh from HD Kote in Mysuru district, and Mallaiah and Swamy from Gundlupet in Chamarajanagar district. Superintendent of Police S. Jahnavi stated that a search is underway for Khalim and the owners of the trucks involved. The operation was initiated after GC Shivakumar filed a complaint alleging illegal and cruel cattle transport to slaughterhouses. Police found the accused transporting 13 buffaloes, 48 bulls, five oxen, and one calf, contravening the law. All cattle and trucks have been seized, with investigations ongoing.
—Salar News

HCM inspects road repair work at Chamundi Hills

MYSURU, 11 JAN

State Social Welfare and Mysuru District In-Charge Minister Dr HC Mahadevappa inspected the road repair works atop Chamundi Hills, which connects to the iconic Nandi statue, on Sunday. Following public complaints regarding the slow progress of repairs, the minister visited the site. He instructed the Public Works Department to prioritise the completion of outstanding works to reopen the road for public use. "Maintain quality in road repair and the construction of retaining walls," he emphasised during his visit. Unprecedented rainfall in October 2021 resulted in the erosion of this road segment, leaving devotees and tourists unable to access the Nandi statue for four years. Although the work commenced four years ago, delays in funding have impeded progress. The state government has allocated Rs 9.75 crore for the restoration of the affected 350-meter stretch.
—Salar News

Guv is keeping Hate Speech Bill in limbo: CM

CM says he will meet Gehlot to explain about the Bill

MANGALURU, 11 JAN

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah said that Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot had neither granted assent nor sent back the Hate Speech Bill.

Siddaramaiah said in Mangaluru on Sunday that he would meet Gehlot to explain the Bill event as the BJP plans to urge the latter not to give his assent.

"The bill was passed by the legislature. The Governor has neither rejected it or sent it back, nor has given his assent to it. Let's see, whenever he calls, I will go and explain to him (Governor)," Siddaramaiah said.

The Bill proposes a jail term of one year, extendable up to seven years with a fine of Rs 50,000 for hate crime. For repeated offences the maximum imprisonment will be seven years, with a fine of Rs 1 lakh.

The Lok Bhavan (the Governor House) on Friday in a statement had said that the Karnataka Hate Speech and Hate Crimes (Prevention) Bill was "under consideration".

The Supreme Court had earlier ruled that a Governor has three options when receiving a Bill: grant assent, reserve for the President's consideration or return to the state for reconsideration. The apex court ruled that a Governor cannot indefinitely withhold a bill, but did not fix a timeframe as to when the Governor should exercise one of their three options.

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah

Governor Gehlot *PHOTO: PTI*

NO FIGHT FOR CM POST

Responding to a question on an alleged power struggle for the Chief Minister's post, Siddaramaiah said "There is no fight, you (media) create it. Where is the fight? Unnecessarily you ask such questions".

The BJP had earlier claimed on social media that the fight between Siddaramaiah and his Deputy would restart after Sankranti (14 January).

BALLARI PADAYATRA

Reacting to BJP's proposed 'padayatra' (foot march) from Ballari to Bengaluru in connection with recent clashes in Ballari that led to the death of a person, the CM said, "let them do it, who said they should not."

"We (Congress) launched a padayatra when then Lokayukta Santosh Hegde had given a report saying that Ballari has been converted into Republic if Ballari due to illegal mining," Siddaramaiah said. "When I (as Leader of Opposition) discussed in the assembly, Reddy brothers (then minister G Janardhan Reddy and brothers) and Yediyurappa (then CM) vehemently objected, so I had led a p adayatra (to Ballari)."

He was referring to the Congress' 320 km padayatra in 2010 from Bengaluru to Ballari to expose illegal mining in the State.

Questioning the BJP's move, Siddaramaiah alleged, "The banner was regarding the unveiling of Maharshi Valmiki statue, what was the need to remove it?"

Tension had prevailed in parts of Ballari during the night 1 January

after supporters of Ballari City Congress MLA Nara Bharath Reddy and Gangavati BJP MLA G Janardhan Reddy allegedly clashed over a banner installation issue. The situation turned violent with alleged stone-pelting and firing, leaving a Congress worker dead. *—PTI*

RANGOLI

Contestants take part in a Rangoli competition organised by the Telugu Vignana Samithi in Bengaluru on Sunday
PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD

4 Chitradurga youths killed in accident

CHITRADURGA, 11 JAN

Four people from Chitradurga were killed on the spot when their car collided head-on with a lorry on the Bidar–Srirangapatna State Highway near Hindasakatte village in Hiriyur taluk on Saturday, police said.

The deceased Vishwanath, 22, Nanjundi, 23, and Rahul, 23 were residents of the Nanjayyanakottige area in Chitradurga city. Yashwant, 22, was a resident of Megalakottige. .

The victims had gone to a nearby village for dinner and were returning to Chitradurga town when the mishap occurred. The car was completely crushed.

"The impact was so severe that the car was mangled beyond recognition. None of the occupants had any chance of escape," SP Ranjitkumar Bandaru said. *— Salar News*

A view of the Bedti River as it flows westwards from the Western Ghats to the Arabian Sea *PHOTO: ANI*

Varada-Bedti River link project won't damage Ghats: BJP

HAVERI, 11 JAN

Former chief minister Basavaraj Bommai said that the Varada-Bedti River linking project would not cause any damage to the Western Ghats.

The BJP MP on Sunday said a public awareness meeting would be organised in Haveri district under the leadership of heads of various mutts and public representatives about the implementation of project.

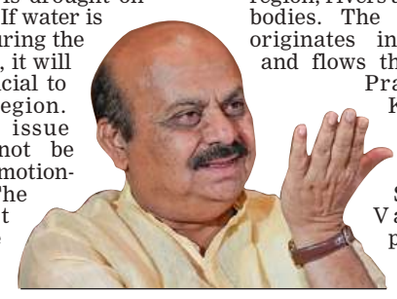
Responding to questions about campaigns in Uttara Kannada district opposing the Varada-Bedti project to protect the Western Ghats, he said the project is not a new one and has existed since 1994.

"There is a difference between the earlier plan and the present one. Under the current plan, there will be no environmental damage or destruction of forests. Only a small quantity of water will be lifted from the Bedti river and there will be no loss of water," he said.

He said the State government should explain the facts to the protesters and religious heads.

Bommai said there should be discussions on this issue by inviting water experts and environmental scientists, and that an amicable decision should be taken.

"There is drought on our side. If water is stored during the monsoon, it will be beneficial to our region. This issue should not be viewed emotionally. The project must be planned in such a way that it does not cause inconvenience to anyone," he said.



Bommai said that the meeting should be convened after the State government prepares a Detailed Project Report (DPR). The government has already given consent to the DPR.

"No river belongs to just a region; rivers are not stagnant bodies. The Krishna river originates in Maharashtra and flows through Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. It does not belong only to Maharashtra. Similarly, the Varada-Bedti project must be implemented," he said. *— PTI*

What is the Varada-Bedti River link project?

The Bedti-Varada River linking project aims to divert 18 TMC surplus water from the west-flowing Bedti river basin (in Uttara Kannada district) to the drought-prone eastern side, that is, districts like Gadag, Koppal, Raichur. It aims to move the water via tunnels and canals, linking the Bedti River to the Varada River for irrigation under the Tungabhadra Project command. However, environmental groups have raised concerns about the impact the project would have on Western Ghats' biodiversity and other downstream ecosystems.

Davanagere BJP leader Sankol ends life

DAVANAGERE, 11 JAN

Senior BJP leader Chandrashekhar Sankol, who was also a former Davanagere Municipal Corporation member, committed suicide on Tuesday by setting himself on fire inside his car near Naganur village here on the outskirts.

Police said he took the extreme step due to severe domestic problems. Chandrashekhar poured petrol inside the vehicle and immolated himself.

Sources said the incident followed a family crisis in which his two children had earlier attempted suicide and were hospitalised. Deeply distressed by their condition and domestic disputes, Chandrashekhar took the fatal decision while his children are undergoing treatment. Police and registered a case and an investigation is on. *— Salar News*

A view of the car in which BJP leader Chandrashekhar Sankol allegedly burnt himself to death. Inset: Chandrashekhar Sankol *PHOTO: SALAR*

Help is available. Please call Tele Manas at 14416, or SAHAI at 080-25497777

12,000 people take part in 'Fit Mysuru' walkathon

MYSURU, 11 JAN

Mysuru witnessed an inspiring show of public participation on Sunday as thousands of people joined the 'Fit Mysuru' Walkathon, transforming the city's streets into a powerful expression of health, environmental awareness and civic unity.

The 5km walkathon was jointly organised by the University of Mysore, the Mysore City Corporation (MCC), the Mysore Gym Association, and the GSS Group of Institutions, with support from several local organisations.

People from all walks of life—including students, athletes, yoga practitioners, enthusiasts, fitness trainers, women's groups, and senior citizens—assembled early in the morning at the Manasagangotri Open Air Theatre. They created an energetic yet disciplined atmosphere.

Holding placards on their hands which had messages about highlighting the need to conserve the environment, protect flora and fauna, improve greenery and avoid pollution, about 12,000 took part in the march. Other signs stressed the importance of maintaining cleanliness and exercising regularly.

MP Sunil Bose, MLA TA Srivatsa, MLCs CN Manjegowda and Shivakumar, Vice Chancellor of University of Mysuru Prof NK Loknath, Deputy Commissioner Lakshmikanth Reddy, MCC Commissioner Syed Asif Tanveer, City Police Commissioner Seema Latk among others were present.
—Salar News

People taking part in the 5 km 'Fit Mysuru' Walkathon held in Mysuru on Sunday *PHOTO: SALAR*

CHILLY BENGALURU

People huddle in the chilly weather at the Bengaluru International Airport on Sunday. The temperature was 16 degrees Celsius *PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD*

TRAGEDY IN DHARWAD

One dies of carbon monoxide poisoning; 6 critical

DHARWAD, 11 JAN

A hotel worker died of suffocation after inhaling smoke from burnt charcoal while six others fell seriously ill in Dharward district. The incident took place in their home, which falls under the Vidyagiri Police Station limits, late on Friday, and the deceased succumbed late on Saturday. All the seven were of Nepali origin.

The deceased is Bibek. The six workers were Naresh, 45; Nitesh, 18; Dikesh, 40; Sudhan, 30; Kumar, 50; and Lakshman, 30. They were rushed to the Dharwad District Hospital on Saturday. Three of them are in a critical condition and are currently admitted in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) of the hospital.

The workers were staying in a house in Sai Darshini Layout and all of them were employed at a hotel named 'Ching's Chow' in Dharwad, where they prepared and sold momos and other food items.

Police said that on the night of the incident, the workers reportedly used a charcoal stove to barbecue chicken. Smoke generated from the charcoal stove soon filled the room. As the windows were closed, it did not go out and the workers soon found it difficult to breathe. "The smoke must have increased after we fell asleep. Since the windows were closed, none of us realised the danger while sleeping, and we became unconscious," said Dinesh, one of the Nepalese workers.

The tragedy came to light the following morning when the hotel owner grew suspicious after the workers failed to report for duty. On visiting their residence, he found one worker dead and the others unconscious. He soon informed the police.

Bibek was scheduled to go to his hometown the next day.

Hubballi–Dharwad Police Commissioner N Shashikumar, said: "Prima facie, the workers suffered suffocation caused by inhalation of smoke from the charcoal stove. We are conducting a thorough investigation."

The police registered a case in connection with the incident. *—Salar News*

The police conducting investigations on Saturday at the house where the Nepali workers were staying in the Sai Darshini Layout in Dharwad *PHOTO: SALAR*

QUOTE of THE DAY

While Khalid and Imam are languishing in jail for five years, 85-year-old Stan Swamy -- an accused in the Elgar Parishad case -- died in jail because of this law .... The Congress supported the BJP government when UAPA was amended in 2019, which is now destroying innocent lives

—ASADUDDIN OWAISI,
AIMIM Chief

Shah demands neutral probe in Sabarimala gold case

This is Shah's first visit to Kerala as BJP eyes upcoming polls

T'PURAM, 11 JAN

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday raked up the Sabarimala gold loss case to target the ruling Left in Kerala, accusing it of "protecting" the real culprits, and demanded a probe by a neutral investigation agency into the sensational case.

Visiting the Kerala capital for the first time after the BJP-led NDA captured power in the prestigious Thiruvananthapuram city corporation in the recent local body polls, Shah virtually sounded the bugle for the Assembly polls, scheduled to be held in just a few months, during his address to the newly elected BJP representatives of local bodies in the state and while inaugurating the party's Mission 2026 programme.

He said that the Assembly elections in Kerala and West Bengal would be held together and asserted that the BJP would form governments in both the eastern and southern states.

Raising the Sabarimala gold loss issue to politically target Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and his government, he said those who failed to protect the properties of the hill shrine could not safeguard the faith of the people.

"Only the BJP can safeguard the faith of believers in Kerala," Shah said.

Additionally, the Union Minister offered prayers at the Sree Padmanabhaswamy Temple here and said his visit was a thanksgiving for the BJP securing its mayoral post in the Thiruvananthapuram City Corporation.

Clad in a traditional dhoti and kasavu (silk) shawl, Shah was received at the shrine by temple authorities and Travancore royal family member Aditya Varma. —*PTI*

Union Home Minister Amit Shah being garlanded during a meeting with the newly elected BJP representatives, in Thiruvananthapuram ***PHOTO: PTI***

- Amit Shah said the Assembly elections in Kerala and West Bengal would be held together and asserted that the BJP would form governments in both the eastern and southern states.

SEXUAL ASSAULT CASE

Survivor posts emotional message after ex-MLA's arrest

T'PURAM, 11 JAN

After the arrest of expelled Congress MLA **Rahul Mamkootathil** in a fresh sexual assault case, the woman who had first lodged a complaint against him posted an emotional message on her social media account on Sunday

In her post, she thanked God for giving her the courage to speak out despite the pain, judgment, and betrayal she endured.

She said faith held the survivors together when their bodies were violated and when their unborn babies were taken away by force.

The reference was made in the backdrop of allegations that Mamkootathil had also forced the survivor in the third case to abort her pregnancy.

She said the souls of the aborted babies should rest in peace, free from violence and fear, and from a world that failed to protect survivors.

The author of the post was the first to approach the police with a complaint alleging that she was sexually assaulted multiple times and forced to abort her pregnancy.

Soon after the complaint was registered, Mamkootathil went into hiding.

Meanwhile, Mamkoo tathil faced protests by the activists of DYFI and Yuva Morcha at a government hospital on Sunday when he was taken there for medical examination.

As the police vehicle arrived at the hospital premises, a large number of volunteers of the Democratic Youth Federation of India (DYFI) and the Yuva Morcha, the youth wings of the CPI (M) and the BJP respectively, rushed towards it raising slogans. —*PTI*

- The author of the post was the first to approach the police with a complaint alleging that she was sexually assaulted multiple times and forced to abort her pregnancy.

WB BLO found dead, family alleges SIR stress

KOLKATA, 11 JAN

A Booth Level Officer (BLO) was found hanging inside a primary school in Murshidabad district, West Bengal, with his family alleging that heavy work pressure linked to Special Intensive Revision drove him to take his own life, police said on Sunday. The deceased, Hamimul Islam, 47, was a primary school teacher at Paikmari Char Krishnapur Boys Primary School and also served as a BLO in Purba Alaipur village. His body was discovered late on Saturday night inside a room on the school premises. Family said he left home for school on Saturday morning but did not return. —*PTI*

Modi to visit Andamans for Netaji Day

SRI VIJAYA PURAM, 11 JAN

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is expected to visit the Andaman and Nicobar Islands on 23 January to commemorate Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose's 129th birth anniversary, officials said. During his visit, he is likely to hoist the national flag and deliver a public address at Netaji Stadium, formerly Gymkhana Ground, where Bose unfurled the Tricolour in 1943. Modi is also expected to pay floral tributes at Netaji's statue in Marina Park, lay a wreath at the Martyrs Column, and visit the Cellular Jail to honor Veer Savarkar. —*PTI*

Thackeray loyalist joins Shiv Sena ahead of elections

MUMBAI, 11 JAN

In a significant setback for the Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena (UBT) ahead of the Mumbai civic elections, former MLA Dagdu Sakpal joined the Eknath Shinde-led faction on Sunday. Sakpal, a longstanding Thackeray loyalist, has represented Mumbai's Lalbaug-Parel-Sewree belt multiple times, a Thackeray stronghold for more than five decades. His defection is particularly notable as Ajay Choudhari has held the seat since 2014, and it provides a boost to Shinde, who has been attempting to make inroads into traditional Thackeray territory. The move follows a meeting between Sakpal and Shinde last week, which had sparked speculation over a possible switch. —*PTI*

Cong to contest Punjab polls under joint leadership

BATHINDA, 11 JAN

AICC General Secretary for Punjab, Bhupesh Baghel, on Sunday said the Congress will contest the 2027 state elections under collective leadership, with all senior leaders as potential chief ministerial faces. He was joined by Punjab Congress President Amarinder Singh Raja Warring and Congress Legislative Party leader Partap Singh Bajwa. Baghel said the final decision on the CM candidate would be taken by Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge and Rahul Gandhi. Speaking during the concluding phase of the 'MGNREGA Bachao Sangram' campaign, he criticised the Centre's plan to replace MGNREGA. —*PTI*

Plantation records valid SIR docu in North WB: Suvendu

KOLKATA, 11 JAN

Senior BJP leader **Suvendu Adhikari** on Sunday said the ECI has approved the use of tea garden and cinchona plantation employment records as valid documents for identity and residence for the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls for seven districts in the northern parts of West Bengal.

Adhikari, the leader of the opposition in the West Bengal assembly, also posted on X a letter dated January 11 issued by ECI to the Chief Electoral Officer of the state. The letter shared by Adhikari stated that the Commission has conveyed its no objection to accepting tea garden and cinchona plantation records as documents for SIR 2026 in the districts of Darjeeling, Kalimpong, Jalpaiguri, Cooch Behar, Alipurduar, Uttar Dinajpur and Dakshin Dinajpur.

In the post written in Hindi, Adhikari described the decision as a "major victory" for what he called the long-neglected voices of north Bengal.

"This approval applies to the districts of North Bengal, where our hardworking tribal & forest-dwelling people and plantation workers have long been deprived of their democratic rights due to documentation hurdles and the state government's negligence," the BJP leader said.

He urged all eligible voters in these areas to come forward and enrol themselves in electoral rolls using their plantation employment records, stating that voting rights were the true strength of the people and essential for strengthening democracy. —*PTI*

4 MORE SROS APPOINTED FOR WEST BENGAL SIR

The Election Commission appointed four more special roll observers (SROs) for West Bengal to strengthen supervision of the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in the state. Those named as SROs were Ratan Biswas, Vikas Singh, Sandeep Rewaji Rathod and Shailesh. The SROs will closely monitor the revision and verification exercises and ensure strict adherence to statutory instructions. They will ensure transparency, accuracy and uniform implementation of instructions related to electoral rolls.

Meanwhile, BJP workers on Sunday protested at various places in West Bengal, demanding the immediate arrest of TMC supporters, who are alleged to be behind the recent attack on Adhikari.

Moreover, Adhikari termed Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's allegations over the ongoing SIR in the state as "baseless and exaggerated". —*PTI*

Congress demands share in power, DMK says no

DINDIGUL, 11 JAN

Ruling out chances of a coalition government, senior DMK Minister I Periyasamy asserted on Sunday that Chief Minister MK Stalin is firm against sharing power with allies.

Speaking to reporters here, Periyasamy, when asked on the Congress's demand for a share in power, he said it was its right to raise that demand.

However, the DMK had never accepted that. "There had never been a coalition government," he said, adding the state had all along been ruled by the DMK on its own.

"Our stand is clear. There will be no coalition government," the minister said.

On Stalin's scathing criticism of the Censor Board, he said it was true that the Board is partial.

The Congress had revived its demand for a share in power if the DMK-led alliance wins the Assembly election. Congress MP Manickam Tagore had said recently that it was time for a "share in power."

Meanwhile, BJP Working President Nitin Nabin said on Sunday in Coimbatore that the Tamil Nadu people are "deeply dissatisfied" with the DMK government's failures. —*PTI*

CONG DISTANCES ITSELF FROM EX-MLA

T'PURAM, 11 JAN

The Congress distanced itself from MLA Rahul Mamkootathil, who was arrested in a sexual assault case, stating that he had been expelled from the party.

Senior Congress leader **K Muraleedharan** said on Sunday that the party expelled the Palakkad MLA after his offences came out.

Referring to Mamkootathil's expulsion, Muraleedharan said the party had used its "Brahmastra" at the right time.

Asked about Mamkootathil having been elected as an MLA on a Congress ticket, Muraleedharan reiterated that the party expelled him after finding that he was in the wrong. On Mamkootathil continuing as an MLA, Muraleedharan said he should have resigned long ago. "As we have expelled him, we have no right to demand his resignation. We cannot even issue him a whip," he said.

On the CPI(M) using the arrest for political mileage, Muraleedharan said the Congress had several issues to raise against the Left. "We took action. But a CPI(M) leader facing a similar case is claiming he will contest again," he said. CM Vijayan allowed the man to contest twice, Muralee dharan said. —*PTI*

Mahayuti manifesto vows AI use, action against B'deshis

MUMBAI, 11 JAN

The Mahayuti alliance on Sunday unveiled a wide-ranging manifesto for the upcoming civic body elections in Mumbai, promising technology-led governance to make it a "global powerhouse", a 50 per cent concession on fares for women in BEST buses and "freeing" the city from Bangladeshi migrants.

Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, who unveiled the document, said the BJP-Shiv Sena-RPI (A) alliance would combine "Japanese technology" with local administration to tackle chronic civic problems and bring services to citizens' mobile phones.

The manifesto has emphasised the use of artificial intelligence (AI) to curb corruption, speed up clearances and improve service delivery.

Fadnavis said the alliance aims to expand the Brihanmumbai Electric Supply and Transport (BEST) fleet from around 5,000 to 10,000 buses. He stated that Rs 17,000 crore had been pledged for a climate action plan.

The manifesto has also mentioned a "flood-free Mumbai" plan, promising the city would be free from inundation within five years.

Civic hospitals will be upgraded to the level of AIIMS.

Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde said that the school syllabus would include the history of Mumbai and the Samyukta Maharashtra movement.

Meanwhile, Fadnavis claimed that an SIT report submitted by former DGP Rashmi Shukla indicates there was an attempt to frame him in false cases during the previous Uddhav Thackeray-led MVA government. The then DGP Sanjay Pandey, deputy commissioner of police Laxmikant Patil and assistant commissioner of Police Sardar Patil were involved in a conspiracy to implicate Fadnavis and Shinde. —*PTI*

CM Devendra Fadnavis, DyCM Eknath Shinde and other during the release of Mahayuti manifesto in Mumbai, on Sunday ***PHOTO: PTI***

BJP suspends 18 Latur unit members over indiscipline

Eighteen members of the BJP's Latur unit have been suspended for six years for allegedly violating party discipline and disrupting organisational functioning, a local leader said on Sunday.

The majority of them are contesting the upcoming Latur Municipal Corporation elections independently.

Elections to 29 municipal corporations in Maharashtra including Latur are scheduled on 15 January. —*PTI*

Akhilesh slams UP Dy CM's claim on SP MLAs

LUCKNOW, 11 JAN

Samajwadi Party President **Akhilesh Yadav** on Sunday countered the Uttar Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister's claim that several opposition MLAs wanted to join the BJP and asked whether the saffron party was in touch with him in the first place.

Keshav Prasad Maurya made the claim about the Samajwadi Party (SP) legislators during his Agra visit three days ago.

Sharing Maurya's photograph along with a news report on his statement, the SP chief wrote on X, "First, tell (us) whether the BJP is in touch with you or not."

In the same post, Yadav also asked whether Maurya was in the "main line", "side line", or "out of line" with the BJP.

Maurya, who is also the former BJP state president, claimed on Friday that many SP MLAs were willing to join the BJP, but the party was not inducting them.

Maurya said, "Ever since Akhilesh Yadav returned after losing elections in Bihar, he has been rattled and nervous. He is daydreaming about forming the government in 2027 and ruling by dividing society."

He reiterated that several SP legislators wanted to join the BJP, but the party was not allowing them to do so. —*PTI*

Doval revenge call 'unfortunate,' says Mehbooba

SRINAGAR, 11 JAN

PDP President Mehbooba Mufti on Sunday hit out at National Security Advisor (NSA) Ajit Doval for calling for revenge for centuries-old events, saying it was "merely a dog whistle."

It is unfortunate that the NSA, whose duty is to protect the nation, has chosen to join the "communal ideology of hate," the former J&K hief minister said in a post on X.

Speaking at the opening ceremony of Viksit Bharat Young Leaders Dialogue in Delhi on Saturday, Doval said India has to strengthen itself not just at the borders, but in every other way to "avenge" its painful history of suffering invasions and subjugation. —*PTI*

AMID GEOPOLITICAL TENSION

Modi, Merz set for crucial talks in Ahmedabad

NEW DELHI, 11 JAN

Shoring up bilateral ties in trade, investment, critical technologies and defence are set to be the focus of wide-ranging talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and German Chancellor Friedrich Merz in Ahmedabad on Monday.

As Merz's trip to India is taking place amid a fractious geopolitical environment, including the US's display of raw military strength to capture Venezuela's President Nicolas Maduro, the German leader and Modi are also likely to discuss pressing global challenges. Merz's 12-13 January, visit to India will be his first to Asia as the German Chancellor. Ways to bring peace to Ukraine may also figure prominently in Modi-Merz talks. The German leader will travel to Bengaluru after concluding his engagements in Ahmedabad.

Besides holding talks with PM Modi, Merz is scheduled to visit the Sabarmati Ashram, participate in a kite festival and attend a skill development event in Ahmedabad, according to officials.

In their talks, Modi and Merz are likely to deliberate on trade and investment ties as New Delhi is looking at deepening economic engagement with Europe against the backdrop of Washington's 50 per cent tariff on Indian goods, people familiar with the matter said.

Germany is one of India's most important partners in Europe. It is New Delhi's largest trading partner in the European Union and the bilateral trade in goods and services between the two countries reached USD 51.23 billion in 2024-25.

Days after Merz's trip, the top leaders of the European Union will visit New Delhi during which the two sides may announce finalisation of the much-awaited India-EU free trade agreement.

India will host French President Emmanuel Macron next month. —*PTI*

German Chancellor Friedrich Merz with Prime Minister Narendra Modi in a file photo ***PHOTO: PTI***

PHOTO: PTI

Two more arrested in Delhi Turkman Gate violence case

NEW DELHI, 11 JAN

Delhi Police on Sunday arrested two more persons in connection with the stone pelting at Turkman Gate, taking the total number of arrests in the case to 18. Those arrested so far have been identified as Mohd Naved, Mohd Faiz, Mohd Ubaidullah, Mohd Arib, Mohd Kashif, Mohd Kaif, Mohd Adnan, Sameer Hussain, Mohd Athar, Shahnawaz Alam, Mohd Imran, Mohd Imran alias Raju, Mohd Affan, Mohd Adil, Mohd Aamir Hamza, Mohd Ubaidullah, Fahim and Mohd Sehzad. Meanwhile, security arrangements remain in place in sensitive pockets of the Turkman Gate area, with deployment of police and paramilitary personnel. The police are identifying those involved in spreading misinformation. *—PTI*

Puja Khedkar says house help sedated, looted family

PUNE, 11 JAN

The Pune police have launched a probe into former IAS probationer Puja Khedkar's allegations that a house help had rendered her and her parents, Dilip and Manorama Khedkar unconscious and committed theft at their residence. According to police, Khedkar claimed that the house help hailing from Nepal, who had been employed recently, tied them up, and decamped with their mobile phones and some valuables. Puja managed to free herself and alerted the police using another phone. She is yet to lodge a written complaint. The police are probing the incident. Puja is accused of misrepresenting facts in her application for the 2022 UPSC civil services examination to avail reservation benefits.*—PTI*

Youth held for 'indecent' act near idol in temple

HYDERABAD, 11 JAN

A 26-year-old man was arrested for allegedly unlawfully entering the Katta Maisamma temple premises in Safilguda here and committing "indecent" acts in front of the idol. The BJP, pro-Hindu organisations and devotees held a protest condemning the incident, accusing the man of "urinating" within the temple premises on 10 January. A viral video showed some persons "beating" up a man following the incident after questioning him over the act. A case was filed against the accused, Altaf, from Bidar, Karnataka. He was produced before a city court, which remanded him to judicial custody. Telangana BJP President N Ramchander Rao described the incident as "blasphemous" and attacked the Congress government for allowing it. *—PTI*

Two militants with link to recent firing in Manipur held

IMPHAL, 11 JAN

Two active cadres of a banned militant outfit were arrested in Manipur's Imphal West district for their alleged involvement in recent firing incidents, police said on Sunday. The members of the proscribed KCP (Noyon) were apprehended from Sagolband and Phumlou on Saturday, two days after shots were fired in Langjing Achouba, Ghari and Sangaiprou areas. Police carried out search operations and analysed CCTV footage before confirming their role. An M-20 pistol loaded with ammunition was seized, and the duo were linked to at least eight previous firing incidents. In a separate operation, security forces recovered rifles, improvised mortars, hand grenades and ammunition from Awlmun village in Kangpokpi district. *—PTI*

Biting cold sweeps Delhi, R'than, J&K

IMD warns of continuing cold wave as temperatures plunge across northern states

NEW DELHI, 11 JAN

Cold wave conditions tightened their grip across north India on Sunday, with Delhi, Rajasthan, Punjab, Haryana and Kashmir recording biting temperatures, fog and sub-zero lows at several places.

In the national capital, cold wave conditions prevailed at isolated locations as minimum temperatures dipped to 4.1 degrees Celsius or lower in some pockets. Safdarjung recorded 4.8 degrees Celsius, Palam 3 degrees, Lodhi Road 4.6 degrees, the Ridge 3.7 degrees and Ayanagar 2.9 degrees, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said.

The IMD issued a 'yellow' alert for cold wave conditions, warning that similar weather is likely to continue on Monday. A cold wave is declared when minimum temperatures fall 4.5 to 6.5 degrees below normal. Delhi's air quality remained poor, with the AQI at 295 at 9am.

Rajasthan witnessed cold to severe cold wave conditions at isolated places, with Pratapgarh shivering at minus 2 degrees Celsius. Barmer recorded minus 1 degree, while Pilani, Sikar, Churu, Jhunjhunu and parts of Bikaner hovered near 2 degrees. Dense to very dense fog was reported in eastern Rajasthan.

Punjab and Haryana also reeled under intense cold. Bathinda was Punjab's coldest at 1.6 degrees Celsius, while Hisar recorded 2.2 degrees in Haryana. Fog reduced morning visibility at several places, including Chandigarh, which saw a low of 5 degrees. In Kashmir, 'Chilla-i-Kalan' cold froze Dal Lake. *— PTI*

A municipal worker makes his way through a frozen layer of water in interior Dal Lake as the mercury plunges to -5.7 degrees Celsius during Chillai Kalan, the 40-day harshest winter period in Srinagar *PHOTO: PTI*

TEMP (°C) AT NORTH INDIA'S COLDEST SPOTS ON SUNDAY

- Shopian (Kashmir): **–8.6**
- Srinagar: **–5.2**
- Pratapgarh (Rajasthan): **–2.0**
- Barmer (Rajasthan): **–1.0**
- Bathinda (Punjab): **1.6**
- Hisar (Haryana): **2.2**
- Ayanagar (Delhi): **2.9**

CONGRESS FLAGS NATIONWIDE AIR POLLUTION CRISIS, TARGETS NCAP

NEW DELHI, 11 JAN

The Congress on Sunday cited a research report to allege that air pollution has become a nationwide, structural crisis and accused the government's response of being "exceedingly ineffective and inadequate", renewing its demand for a thorough overhaul of the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP).

Congress General Secretary Jairam Ramesh said a Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air analysis, based on satellite data, showed that 1,787 of 4,041 statutory towns, or nearly 44 per cent, recorded chronic air pollution with PM2.5 levels breaching national standards between 2019 and 2024, excluding 2020.

He claimed the NCAP covers only 130 cities, with 28 lacking continuous monitoring stations, calling it a "Notional Clean Air Programme". *—PTI*

OPENS NEW ASSAM COURT

Personal interests not valid: CJI on Bar Association's protest

GUWAHATI, 11 JAN

Chief Justice of India Surya Kant on Sunday expressed surprise at the opposition by the Gauhati High Court Bar Association to the new integrated Judicial Court Complex at Rangmahal in Assam's North Guwahati, whose foundation stone he laid, saying "personal vested interest should not be valid grounds" for resisting future-ready infrastructure.

Calling the project "envisaged to match aspirations of the future", the CJI said, as head of the judiciary, he was duty-bound to cater to the needs of new entrants to the profession. He said those opposing the relocation were "either ill-informed or not realising the needs of new members of the Bar", and stressed that the site was strategically positioned to provide all facilities under one roof.

The new judicial township, spread across 148 bighas, or nearly 49 acres, will house the principal seat of the Gauhati High Court, district courts, office and Bar buildings, with phase-I costing about Rs 479 crore. Officials said the campus would feature interconnected buildings, advanced security, disaster-resilient design and parking for 900 cars and 400 two-wheelers, enhancing judicial efficiency and faster justice delivery. Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, Union Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal and senior judges attended the ceremony.

Meanwhile, the GHCBA boycotted the event, staging a four-hour strike and hunger protest.

"We are completely against shifting the high court from the heart of the city," vice-president Santanu Borthakur said, adding that legal options were being considered. The association has opposed moving the court from Uzan Bazar, alleging unilateral government action. *—PTI*

Assam CM Himanta Biswa shows the model of the Integrated Judicial Court Complex to CJI Surya Kant at Rangmahal, North Guwahati *PHOTO: X/CM*

Rs 547 cr fraud: 18 with for 'mule' bank accounts held

HYDERABAD, 11 JAN

Eighteen people were arrested in Telangana's Khammam district for operating "mule" bank accounts that routed Rs 547 crore linked to cyber fraud, police said.

A case was filed against 24 accused, with 18 arrested and others absconding. CP Sunil Dutt said the organised network operated between 2022 and 2025, luring people with job offers to open accounts and surrender internet banking credentials.

These were misused to receive, layer, transfer and launder fraud proceeds, attracting charges under the BNS and Information Technology Act. Account analysis showed Rs 547 crore in transactions. The mule accounts were supplied on commission, used for overseas transfers, cryptocurrency conversion and withdrawals, and linked to cybercrime cases nationwide.

Police arrested Vinod of Baghpat and Vinay of Lucknow as masterminds of a Rs 100 crore cryptocurrency scam.

They cheated thousands in Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand between 2019 and 2021. *—PTI*

PHOTO: FREEPIK

Rs 2.58 cr swindled from ex-IPS officer's wife

Cyber fraudsters allegedly cheated the wife of a former IPS officer of Rs 2.58 crore by luring her with promises of high returns on share market investments. She was added to an online messaging group, where a man posing as an expert conducted convincing trading sessions and claimed links to a SEBI registered entity. Trusting him, she invested heavily, including through gold loans. *—PTI*

Mumbai man clicks no 'water supply link', loses Rs 27.7L

A finance manager at a biotech firm in Navi Mumbai was cheated of Rs 27.70 lakh after fraudsters sent him a fake link claiming to be from MIDC, police said. The victim received a WhatsApp message and a call warning that the company's water supply would be cut unless details were updated. After clicking the link, 14 transactions were made within two hours. He froze the account and reported the matter. Police have filed a case against unidentified persons.*—PTI*

Odisha crash: 2 airlifted, another on ventilator

BHUBANESWAR, 11 JAN

- A team of medical experts is continuously monitoring the injured people. Meanwhile, a three-member team started its probe into the crash landing

Two passengers injured in the emergency crash landing of a small aircraft near Rourkela in Odisha were airlifted to Mumbai for treatment, while another injured person is under ventilator support.

At least six people, including two pilots, were injured when the nine-seater IndiaOne Air Cessna Grand C208B aircraft made an emergency crash landing near Rourkela on 10 January. Soon after its departure from Bhubaneswar in the afternoon, the crew declared a 'Mayday' to Rourkela ATC and made a forced landing at 1.20pm in an open area near Kansor.

State Commerce and Transport Department Principal Secretary Usha Padhee said that the airlifted couple were being treated in a private hospital in Rourkela, but wished to go to the Mumbai for further treatment. Similarly, another injured passenger is on ventilation.

A team of medical experts is continuously monitoring the injured people. Meanwhile, a three-member team of the Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau on Sunday started its probe into the crash landing. *—PTI*

At least six people, including two pilots, were injured when the nine-seater aircraft made an emergency crash landing near Rourkela *PHOTO: ANI*

'Indian Idol 3' winner Prashant Tamang dies at 43

NEW DELHI, 11 JAN

Indian Idol 3 winner and actor Prashant Tamang died on Sunday after a cardiac arrest. He was 43.

Close friend and singer Mahesh Sewa told PTI that Tamang collapsed at his Janak Puri residence around 9am and was taken to hospital, where doctors declared him dead on arrival. "I spoke to him a few days ago and he was hale and hearty," Sewa said.

Born on 4 January, 1983, in Darjeeling to a Nepali-speaking Gorkha family, Tamang joined the WB Police after his father died in service. Encouraged by friends, he auditioned for Indian Idol in 2007 and won season three, sparking celebrations across the Darjeeling hills, Sikkim and parts of Nepal.

He later released his debut album 'Dhanyavaad' and transitioned to acting, featuring in several Nepali films. Tamang was recently seen as assassin Daniel Lecho in 'Paatal Lok 2'. He is survived by his wife Geeta Thapa and daughter Ariah. He enjoyed widespread popularity. *—PTI*

UP plans for Tamil classes in schools, colleges of Varanasi

VARANASI, 11 JAN

Regular Tamil classes will be introduced in schools and colleges in UP's Varanasi to boost cultural and linguistic exchanges under PM Narendra Modi's Kashi Tamil Sangamam vision, officials said.

Government Queen's College will start daily evening classes after directions from the district inspector of schools, principal Sumit Kumar said. The move follows Modi's mention of student Payal Patel in his 28 December 'Mann Ki Baat'. Sandhya Kumar Sai from TN will conduct online classes with support from Banaras Hindu University's Tamil department. Officials said plans are underway to send about 50 Varanasi teachers to Tamil Nadu to teach Hindi abroad. *—PTI*

SOMNATH SWABHIMAN PARV

Forces still resist Somnath reconstruction: Modi

SOMNATH, 11 JAN

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said forces that opposed the reconstruction of the Somnath temple after Independence were "still active", calling for unity and vigilance to defeat conspiracies aimed at dividing India.

Addressing the Somnath Swabhiman Parv in Gujarat's Gir Somnath district, he said the temple's 1,000-year history was one of "victory and reconstruction", not defeat.

Referring to repeated attacks from Mahmud of Ghazni's invasion in 1026 to the Mughal era, Modi said attempts were made to portray religiously driven destruction as mere loot. "The hearts of people can never be won at the point of a sword," he said, warning against appeasement of extremist ideologies. He recalled objections even after Independence when Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel resolved to rebuild the shrine and when President Rajendra Prasad inaugurated it in 1951.

Earlier, Modi led the Shaurya Yatra, a ceremonial procession featuring 108 horses, priests playing damrus and cultural performances along a one-km route, before offering prayers. Thousands of devotees thronged the temple complex, braving winter chill to witness decorations, fireworks and a 3,000-drone show marking 1,000 years since the invasion. *—PTI*

Prime Minister Narendra Modi at Somnath Temple during the Shaurya Yatra procession as part of Somnath Swabhiman Parv, in Somnath, Gujarat; PM Modi offers prayers at Somnath Temple *PHOTO: PTI*

PROTEST AGAINST ICE

Demonstrators outside the White House in Washington against the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agent, Jonathan Ross, who fatally shot 37-year-old Renee Good inside her SUV in Minneapolis on 7 January. A viral video showed Good, who was inside her SUV, interacting with a federal agent while her spouse wasoutside. Minutes later as her car was moving forward, she was shot by the agent and succumbed to her injury ***PHOTO: PTI***

WHAT THE NEW I-T ACT MEANS FROM 1 APRIL

The new Income Tax law was approved by Parliament on 12 August 2025, after scrutiny by a Parliamentary committee. ***PHOTO: FREEPIK***

Beginning 1 April, the Income Tax Act, 2025, will come into force, replacing the six-decade-old tax law and the changes made in tax laws in 2026-27 Budget will be incorporated in the new legislation.

The 2025 I-T law is revenue-neutral with no change in tax rates. It has only made direct tax laws simple to understand, removed ambiguities, thus reducing scope for litigations. It reduces text volume and sections by about 50 per cent vis-à-vis the 1961 Income Tax Act.

The new law simplifies the tax timeline by doing away with the distinction between the assessment year and the previous year, replacing it with a single 'tax year' framework. It also allows taxpayers to claim TDS refund even when ITRs are filed after deadlines, without any penal charges.

Any changes with regard to taxation of individuals, corporates, HUFs and others, which are announced in the Budget for 2026-27 on 1 February, will be incorporated in the new I-T Act, 2025.

The rules to implement the new Income Tax law are being framed and likely to be notified after the presentation of the FY27 Budget.

The new Income Tax law was approved by Parliament on 12 August 2025, after scrutiny by a Parliamentary committee. It had become an Act after receiving assent of President Droupadi Murmu on 21 August, 2025.

The rules relating to the Income Tax Act, 2025, are being worked out, while the various tax return forms like those relating to payment of Advance Tax, TDS, will be notified thereafter.

Following is an explainer about the Income Tax Act, 2025.

Q. Why the Income Tax Act, 1961, was reviewed?

A. Income tax law was enacted 64 years ago in 1961 and since then a lot of changes have taken place in the society, in the way people earn money and companies do business. The 1961 Act was framed at a time when Indian republic was young and faced challenges peculiar to those times. Over the time, as the country progressed, the Act was amended to keep pace with changing times.

In view of the technological advancement and changes in the socio-economic fabric of the country, there was a pressing need to completely overhaul the archaic Income Tax Act which has become bulky on account of hundreds of amendments in the law. It has become almost impossible for the common man to comprehend the law and multiple references to different sections, sub-sections, and provisos.

Q. What the new Income Tax Act proposes to do?

A. The new law is leaner and more reader-friendly. The intention of the government is to halve the volume compared to the old law and make the language simpler so that taxpayer can know his exact tax liability. It would also help in reducing litigations and thereby cut down on disputed tax demands.

Q. How will the new law be leaner?

A. The Income Tax Act, 1961 deals with imposition of direct taxes -- personal I-T, corporate tax, securities transaction tax, besides gift and wealth tax. The Act has about 298 sections and 23 chapters.

Over the time, the government has abolished various levies including wealth tax, gift tax, fringe benefit tax and banking cash transaction tax. Several sections have been amended, added, removed or have become obsolete over the last 6 decades.

The new Act will be free of all the amendments and sections which are no longer relevant.

Q. How the new law will affect tax liability of individuals and others?

A. Any tweak in income tax rates is usually done through Finance Act which is part of the Union Budget presented in Parliament every year on 1 February. All amendments announced in the upcoming Budget will be incorporated in the new Bill.

Q. Have governments in the past attempted to replace the 1961 I-T Act?

A. In 2010, 'The Direct Taxes Code Bill, 2010' was introduced in Parliament. It was referred to the Standing Committee for scrutiny. The Bill, however, lapsed because of the change in government in 2014. In November 2017, the government had set up a six-member committee to redraft the Income Tax Act. The panel had submitted its report to finance minister in August 2019 *—PTI*

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

SALAR ساڈہ

Greenland's harsh habitat, infra woes deter mining

Greenland's harsh environment, lack of key infrastructure and difficult geology have so far prevented anyone from building a mine to extract the sought-after rare earth elements that many high-tech products require. Even if US President Donald Trump prevails in his effort to take control of the Arctic island, those challenges won't go away.

Trump has prioritised breaking China's stranglehold on the global supply of rare earths ever since the world's number two economy sharply restricted who could buy them after the US imposed widespread tariffs last spring. The Trump administration has invested hundreds of millions of dollars and even taken stakes in several companies. Now the president is again pitching the idea that wresting control of Greenland away from Denmark could solve the problem.

"We are going to do something on Greenland whether they like it or not," Trump said on Friday.

But Greenland may not be able to produce rare earths for years — if ever. Some companies are trying anyway, but their efforts to unearth some of the 1.5 million tons of rare earths encased in rock in Greenland generally haven't advanced beyond the exploratory stage. Trump's fascination with the island nation may be more about countering Russian and Chinese influence in the Arctic than securing any of the hard-to-pronounce elements like neodymium and terbium that are used to produce the high-powered magnets needed in electric vehicles, wind turbines, robots and fighter jets, among other products.

"The fixation on Greenland has always been more about geopolitical posturing — a military-strategic interest and stock-promotion narrative — than a realistic supply solution for the tech sector," said Tracy Hughes, founder and executive director of the Critical Minerals Institute.

A DIFFICULT PLACE TO BUILD A MINE

The main challenge to mine in Greenland is, "of course, the remoteness. Even in the south where it's populated, there are few roads and no railways, so any mining venture would have to create these accessibilities," said Diogo Rosa, an economic geology researcher at the Geological Survey of Denmark and Greenland. Power would also have to be generated locally, and expert manpower would have to be brought in.

Another concern is the prospect of mining rare earths in the fragile Arctic environment just as Greenland tries to build a thriving tourism industry, said Patrick Schroder, a senior fellow in the Environment and Society program at the Chatham House think-tank in London.

Besides the unforgiving climate that encases much of Greenland under layers of ice and freezes the northern fjords for much of the year, the rare earths found there tend to be encased in a complex type of rock called eudialyte, and no one has ever developed a profitable process to extract rare earths from that type of rock. Elsewhere, these elements are normally found in different rock formations called carbonatites, and there are proven methods to work with them. This week, Critical Metals' stock price more than doubled after it said it plans to build a pilot plant in Greenland this year. But that company and more than a dozen others exploring deposits on the island remain far away from actually building a mine and would still need to raise at least hundreds of millions of dollars.

PRODUCING RARE EARTHS IS A TOUGH BUSINESS

Even the most promising projects can struggle to turn a profit, particularly when China resorts to dumping extra materials onto the market to depress prices and drive competitors out of business, as it has done many times in the past. Currently, most critical minerals have to be processed in China.

The US is scrambling to expand the supply of rare earths outside of China during the one-year reprieve from even tougher restrictions that Trump said Xi Jinping agreed to in October.

A number of companies around the world are already producing rare earths or magnets and can deliver more quickly than anything in Greenland, which Trump has threatened to seize with military power if Denmark doesn't agree to sell it.

FOCUSING ON MORE PROMISING PROJECTS ELSEWHERE

Many in the industry, too, think America should focus on helping proven companies instead of trying to build new rare earth mines in Greenland, Ukraine, Africa or elsewhere. A number of other mining projects in the US and friendly nations like Australia are further along and in much more accessible locations.

The US government has invested directly in the company that runs the only rare earths mine in the US, MP Materials, a lithium miner and a company that recycles batteries and other products with rare earths.

Scott Dunn, CEO of Noveon Magnetics, said those investments should do more to reduce China's leverage, but it's hard to change the math quickly when more than 90 per cent of the world's rare earths come from China. *—PTI*

US has invested directly in the company that runs the only rare earths mine in the US, MP Materials, a lithium miner and a company that recycles batteries and other products with rare earths ***PHOTO: ANI***

Retouched images of Israel's first lady ignite fiery ethics debate

In the picture, Sara Netanyahu's skin is poreless, her eyes overly defined, and her hair perfectly coiffed — a look officials acknowledge is the result of heavy retouching ***PHOTO: ANI***

The photos seemed destined for posterity in Israel's state archives.

In the snapshots, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is joined by his wife, Sara, as well as US Ambassador Mike Huckabee and a group of Israeli soldiers, as they light Hanukkah candles at the Western Wall, the holiest site where Jews pray. The leaders exchange triumphant looks.

But something is off.

Sara Netanyahu's skin is poreless, her eyes overly defined, and her hair perfectly coiffed — a look officials acknowledge is the result of heavy retouching.

Critics say the issue isn't the use of photo-editing software, which is common on the social media accounts of celebrities and public figures. They say it's the circulation of the images in official government announcements, which distorts reality, violates ethical codes and risks compromising official archiving and record-keeping efforts.

"All the pictures to this day in the archives in Israel are authentic pictures of reality as it was captured by the lenses of photographers' cameras since the establishment of the state," said Shabi Gatenio, the veteran political journalist who broke the story in The Seventh Eye, an Israeli site that covers local media.

Since the manipulation of images was revealed, the government has taken the unprecedented step of crediting Sara Netanyahu in its releases that include manipulated images. And it's not clear if the official archive will include images of her taken during the second half of last year, when Gatenio said the editing appears to have begun.

The first lady's personal spokesperson did not respond to a request for comment.

Nitzan Chen, director of the Government Press Office, told The Associated Press that images of the PM are never manipulated and that his office would not upload any retouched photos to the official archive.

PERSONAL PHOTOSHOP HABIT ENTERS POLITICAL REALM

Sara Netanyahu, 67, has long used photo-editing software on her images. Her social media account is filled with images in which her face appears heavily retouched.

But the topic raised eyebrows since her Photoshop habit entered the public record.

Gatenio said he first noticed this last July, when the couple visited President Donald Trump in Washington, DC, and again in September, as Sara Netanyahu joined her husband on the tarmac ahead of a trip to New York for the UN General Assembly.

At the time, the PM's office released a video of the send-off along with a photo, credited to Avi Ohayon, an official government photographer.

Comparing the photo to the raw video, Hany Farid, a digital forensics expert at the University of California, Berkeley, said the image had been post-processed, bearing local manipulations to smooth the first lady's skin and remove wrinkles.

Since then, photos showing the first lady meeting with Vice President JD Vance and his wife, Usha, in Washington also appear to have been retouched, Farid said.

Chen, the head of the Government Press Office, said office lawyers are trying to determine how to handle and properly identify photos "processed by people other than GPO photographers."

He said the Justice Ministry is also examining the "criteria, limitations and possibilities" of the edited images, though he stressed there is nothing illegal about touching up photos. The issue, he said, is being transparent when such changes are made.

For now, his office has decided to add Sara Netanyahu's name to press releases that include retouched images. Since November, press releases showing photos of her smiling next to Trump and the family of the last hostage in Gaza in Washington, visiting a Miami synagogue and attending a funeral for an Israeli mayor have included this label.

At least one outlet, the Times of Israel, has said it will no longer carry official state photos that appear to have been manipulated.

A BROADER PHENOMENON

Chen said the prime minister is never edited: "No Photoshop, no corrections, no colour. Nothing."

While his face may not be retouched, the prime minister's official Instagram account tells another story.

The page has posted a bevvy of content that appears to be AI-edited or generated, including a picture of the couple with Trump and first lady Melania Trump celebrating the new year in Washington.

The photo raised suspicions in Israel because it shows Sara Netanyahu wearing a black dress, absent from other photos of the event, where she wore a dark red frock. Appearing in the sky above the couple are brightly colored fireworks and American and Israeli flags that Farid said were "almost certainly" generated by AI.

It is now marked with a tag on Instagram indicating that it may have been altered or generated using AI. It is not clear when the tag was added, nor by whom.

Netanyahu is not alone. Many world figures, including Trump, use AI-generated image manipulation frequently in their public output.

Tehilla Shwartz Altshuler, who runs the "Democracy in the Digital Age Program" at the Israel Democracy Institute, a Jerusalem think tank, called it "part of the populist playbook" and said there was "no question" that Netanyahu was emulating how Trump uses the technology. Netanyahu's official Instagram has posted a video of Trump and Netanyahu in a B-2 bomber that appears entirely AI-generated. It is captioned "on our victory lap," referencing the joint Israel-US attacks on Iran last year.

"This is exactly what Netanyahu and his surrounding circle have tried to do for many years," she said. "Presenting himself as a superhero, his wife as a supermodel, their family as a super loyal family. Even when it wasn't the case, even at the expense of actual political work, administrative work and social work." *—PTI*

Kurdish fighters exit Aleppo after violent clashes

ALEPPO, 11 JAN

Kurdish fighters were evacuated from a contested neighbourhood in Aleppo, Syria, following several days of fierce clashes with government forces. State-run news agency SANA reported that buses transported the final group of fighters from the Sheikh Maqsoud area to northeastern Syria, controlled by the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF). SDF commander Mazloum Abdi stated, "Through international mediation to halt the attacks and violations against our people in Aleppo, we reached an understanding leading to a ceasefire." He urged mediators to "uphold their promises to stop the violations and work towards the safe return of the displaced to their homes." 360 fighters were transported on Sunday. *—PTI*

1 dead as bushfires burn Australia

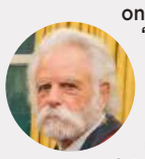
VICTORIA, 11 JAN

The Australian government has declared a state of emergency across several parts of south-east Australia as bushfires that began on 7 January continue to spread. Emergency Management Commissioner Tim Wiebusch reported that more than 30 fires have killed one person and destroyed more than 300 buildings, including sheds and other rural structures. Thousands of firefighters and more than 70 aircraft are battling the blazes. Police said human remains were found near Longwood, about 110 km north of Melbourne, though the victim has not been identified. Authorities warned the fires, fuelled by hot, dry and windy conditions, could burn for weeks. Victoria Premier Jacinta Allan has declared a State of Disaster in several areas as fires burn across about 3,50,000 hectares. *—Agencies*

'Grateful Dead' co-founder Bob Weir dies at 78

WASHINGTON, 11 JAN

Veteran rock musician Bob Weir, co founder and lead of the iconic 'Grateful Dead', died aged 78. He died of lung complications after a cancer diagnosis in July. His daughter announced his demise on Instagram.



"Bobby will forever be a guiding force whose unique artistry reshaped American music," she wrote, requesting privacy for the family. Weir was one of the band's two frontmen. Born Robert Hall Parber on 16 October 1947, he was the youngest member of the original band and became a pivotal figure in the music world, continuing a solo career after Jerry Garcia's death. He is survived by his wife and two daughters. *—Agencies*

Pulitzer winner Daniel Walker Howe dies at 88

NEW YORK, 11 JAN

Daniel Walker Howe, a Pulitzer Prize-winning historian known for his seminal work "What Hath God Wrought," died at age 88. Howe died on 25 December, as confirmed by the University of California, where he served as a professor emeritus.

Awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 2008, his book examines the transformative technological and social changes in the US from 1815 to 1848, exploring themes such as westward expansion, president Andrew Jackson, and the debate surrounding slavery. The title references the first telegraph sent in 1844, highlighting the era's technological strides and societal divides. *—PTI*

Iran threatens US and Israel military

As protests rock the country, Iran says the duo would be legitimate targets if US strikes

DUBAI, 11 JAN

Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf, Iran's parliament Speaker warned on Sunday that the US military and Israel would be "legitimate targets" if America strikes the Islamic Republic amid protests of the theocracy's failing economy.

Qalibaf made the threat as lawmakers rushed the dais in the Iranian parliament, shouting: "Death to America!"

US President Donald Trump has repeatedly threatened to strike Iran if the government kills protesters. "Iran is looking at FREEDOM. Perhaps like never before. The USA stands ready to help!!!" he posted on Truth Social on Saturday.

Qalibaf said that the people of Iran should know that those arrested will be punished in the "most sever" way.

He went on to directly threaten Israel and the US military, possibly with a preemptive strike.

"In the event of an attack on Iran, both the occupied territory (Israel) and all American military centres, bases and ships in the region will be our legitimate targets," Qalibaf said. "We do not consider ourselves limited to reacting after the action and will act based on any objective signs of a threat."

Iran security forces opening fire on protesters *PHOTO: SCREENGRAB*

> **My compatriots... you have severely weakened Khamenei's repressive apparatus .... The Islamic Republic is facing a severe shortage of mercenaries.... Do not abandon the streets... President Trump .... has declared that he is ready to help you**
>
> —Reza Pahlavi, exiled Crown Prince

The US military has said in the Mideast it is "postured with forces that span the full range of combat capability to defend our forces, our partners and allies and US interests."

Any decision to go to war would rest with Iran's 86-year-old Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who has defied Trump and signalled a crackdown in "rioters".

Meanwhile online videos sent out of Iran, likely using Starlink satellite transmitters with the communications blackout continuing, purportedly showed demonstrators flood the streets of Tehran, despite authorities shutting off streets. Videos purporting to show peaceful protests were also seen.

In Mashhad, Iran's second-largest city footage purported to show protesters confronting security forces in the backdrop of flaming debris. Mashhad is home to the Imam Reza shrine, the holiest in Shiite Islam, making the protests there carry heavy significance.

On Saturday, the government declared protesters "enemy of God," a death-penalty charge. Iranian state television ran statements that even those who "helped rioters" would face the charge. *—PTI*

On Saturday, the Iranian government declared protesters 'enemy of God' with the death penalty charge *PHOTO: SCREENGRAB*

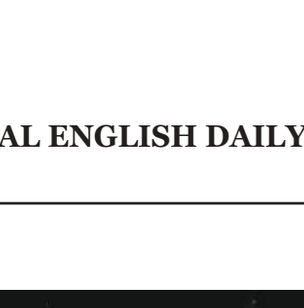
US bombs ISIS in Syria, month after ambush

WASHINGTON, 11 JAN

The US has launched another round of retaliatory strikes against the Islamic State in Syria (ISIS) following last month's ambush that killed two US soldiers and one American civilian interpreter in the country.

The US fired over 90 precision munitions to hit more than 35 alleged ISIS targets across Syria, using at least two dozen aircraft as part of 'Operation Hawkeye Strike'.

Saturday's strikes are part of a broader operation that is part of President Donald Trump's response to the deadly ISIS attack that killed Sgt Edgar Brian Torres-Tovar, Sgt William Nathaniel Howard, members of the Iowa National Guard, and Ayad Mansoor Sakat, a civilian interpreter, in Palmyra last month.



US Central Command video of US strikes in Syria *PHOTO: X*

On 19 December, the US had launched a large-scale strike that hit 70 targets across central Syria that allegedly had IS infrastructure and weapons. The Syrian government said it had supported the strikes.

"Our message remains strong: if you harm our warfighters, we will find you and kill you anywhere in the world, no matter how hard you try to evade justice," US Central Command said in a statement. *—PTI*

Trump signs order to protect Venezuelan oil revenue

WEST PALM BEACH, 11 JAN

US President Donald Trump's executive order on Venezuelan oil revenue is meant to ensure that money remains protected from being judicial proceedings. Its legal underpinnings are the National Emergencies Act and International Emergency Economic Powers Act.

The executive order, signed Friday, and made public on Saturday, says if the funds were to be seized for such use, it could "undermine US efforts to ensure economic and political stability in Venezuela".

These funds, termed "Foreign Government Deposit Funds," are to remain frozen unless specifically authorised.

The White House said loss of control over Venezuelan oil revenue could strengthen groups such as Iran and Hezbollah, while weakening efforts to stabilise Venezuela and the wider Western Hemisphere. Protecting the funds, it added, also supports US compliance with international obligations.

The order comes amid top oil firm executives terming Venezuela "univestable" at meeting with Trump on Saturday. Trump assured the executives of security and said that they would be dealing directly with the US and not the Venezuelan government.

Nobel Peace can't be shared: Nobel Institute

The Nobel Institute said Venezuelan Opposition leader Maria Corina Machado, who won the Peace Prize, cannot give her award to Trump. The prize cannot be shared, the institute said. The Republican recently said he would be honoured if Machado gives him the prize when she visits Washington.

On Friday, Trump signed orders on Venezuelan oil *PHOTO: PTI*

US WARNS CITIZENS OF PARAMILITARIES

The US urged its citizens to leave Venezuela amid news of armed paramilitaries tracking down US citizens, a week after US captured Nicolás Maduro. *—Agencies*

Myanmar votes in 2nd round of polls

YANGON, 11 JAN

Myanmar resumed voting on Sunday in the second round of its first general election in five years, extending polling to additional townships amid ongoing armed conflict between the military government and its opponents. Polling stations opened at 6 am local time in 100 townships across several regions and states, including areas that have seen recent clashes, highlighting the security risks surrounding the vote.

The election is being conducted in three phases because of fighting. The first round was held on 28 December in 102 townships, while a final phase is scheduled for January 25. Voting will not take place in 65 townships due to security concerns.

Myanmar's two-house parliament has 664 seats, with the military constitutionally guaranteed 25 per cent in each house. Critics say the polls are neither free nor fair and are aimed at legitimising military rule following the 2021 coup that ousted Aung San Suu Kyi's elected government.

More than 4,800 candidates from 57 parties are contesting, though only six parties are competing nationwide. The first phase saw the military-backed USDP win nearly 90 per cent of lower house seats contested. Suu Kyi, serving a 27-year prison term, and her dissolved National League for Democracy are not participating. *—PTI*

Polling opened at 6am in 100 townships, including areas that have seen recent clashes, highlighting the election's security risk *PHOTO: ANI*

Yemen govt reclaims territory from STC

ADEN, 11 JAN

Yemen's government claimed it has retaken parts of southern and eastern Yemen from the Southern Transitional Council (STC), as thousands gathered in Aden to support the secessionist group.

Rashad al-Alimi, head of the Saudi Arabia-backed Presidential Leadership Council (PLC), said on Saturday that government forces had regained control over the two regions and re-established authority across southern Yemen.

Al-Alimi said the government has called former STC members to Riyadh for talks on Yemen's future, adding that the military will now operate under the command of the Saudi-led coalition.

The statement followed a Saudi-backed offensive that expelled STC from Hadramout and al-Mahra, areas the group had seized towards end-2025. The two provinces border Saudi Arabia and together make up nearly half of Yemen's territory.

The conflict has also exposed the friction between Saudi Arabia and the UAE, with Saudi authorities accusing the UAE of supporting the STC.

Al-Alimi's comments came as large crowds assembled in Aden, an STC stronghold, amid conflicting reports over whether the group would be disbanded. *— ANI*

A residential building burns after a Russian strike in Kryvyi Rih, Ukraine on Thursday *PHOTO: PTI*

UKRAINE DRONE STRIKES RUSSIA, ONE KILLED

MOSCOW, 11 JAN

A Ukrainian drone strike killed one person and has wounded three others in the Russian city of Voronezh, local officials reported on Sunday.

A young woman died overnight in a hospital intensive care unit after debris from a drone fell on a house during the attack on Saturday, regional Governor Alexander Gusev said on Telegram.

More than 10 apartment buildings, private houses and a high school were damaged, he said, adding that air defences shot down 17 drones over Voronezh. The city is home to just over 1 million people and lies some 250km from the Ukrainian border.

Meanwhile, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said that Russia bombarded his nation with almost 1,100 drones over the course of the week. Overnight into Sunday, Russia launched 154 drones at Ukraine, of which 125 were shot down. At least two people were killed on Saturday, and 15 others injured in Ukraine. *—Agencies*

NATIONAL UNITY DAY

Nepalese royalists demand monarchy's return before polls

KATHMANDU, 11 JAN

Supporters of Nepal's deposed royal family rallied, demanding the restoration of the monarchy ahead of March elections.

Protesters rallied on Sunday was the National Unity Day, marking the birth anniversary nation-builder Prithvi Narayan Shah.

"We love our king. Bring back the king," the rally participants chanted around the statue of Shah, who started the Shah dynasty in the 18th century. The last Shah king — Gyanendra — was forced to step down, and the monarchy was abolished in 2008, making Nepal a republic.

Monarchy supporters protest on National day of Unity *PHOTO: PTI*

It was the first rally by supporters of ousted King Gyanendra since the Gen Z protests in September installed an interim government.

In a video Gyanendra is heard saying that while there was once worry about whether Nepal would be built. Today there is growing fear about whether the country can even be saved.

Meanwhile, Nepal President Ramchandra Paudel called for "safeguarding" national independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity.

The annual rally in the past has turned violent with clashes between demonstrators and police.

Two people were killed during a pro-king rally last March. Sunday's gathering was peaceful as riot police kept a close watch on the event. The royal family still has significant support. *—PTI*

Thailand wants review of MoUs with Cambodia

BANGKOK, 11 JAN

Thai Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul called for a review of two long-standing memorandums of understanding (MoUs) on land and maritime border disputes. He argued that technological changes and new international standards made the MoUs outdated.

The MoU signed in 2000 covers land border; the one signed in 2001 covers lapping maritime areas, should be revised or replaced, Anutin said. He suggested an updated framework, that follows modern survey and legal principles.

Fighting between Thailand and Cambodia renewed in July and December 2025. The 27 December ceasefire, ended nearly three weeks of fighting that left more than a 100 people dead. *—PTI*

Millions starve in Sudan on 1,000 days of civil war

CAIRO/GENEVA/PORT SUDAN, 11 JAN

The Sudan civil war crossed 1,000 days on Friday, civilians bear the brunt of the conflict. The UN estimates that two thirds of the population will need humanitarian assistance. About 21 million face acute food insecurity.

Fighting broke out in April 2023 due to a struggle between the government's Armed Forces (SAF) and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF). Causing Sudan to plunge into the largest humanitarian crisis, according to the UN. SAF and RSF have been accused of war crimes, showing little sign of ending.

The conflict has driven the health system to the "brink of collapse," WHO official in Sudan. Sudan is also the world's largest displacement crisis, with an estimated 13.6 million people – nearly a third of the population - uprooted by the fighting.

Sudan is witnessing largest humanitarian crisis, says UN *PHOTO: UN*

Children bear the brunt of the daily fighting. More than 5 million children have been forced from their homes – the equivalent of 5,000 children displaced every day, the UN said. Millions of children, including babies, are at risk of sexual violence.

—Salar News with Agencies

Narmadesh Brass SME IPO opens on 12 January

NEW DELHI, 11 JAN

Gujarat-based manufacturer Narmadesh Brass Industries announced on Sunday that its Rs 44.8 crore initial public offering (IPO) will open for public subscription on the BSEs SME (Small and Medium Enterprises) platform on 12 January. The company has fixed the IPO price at Rs 515 per share. The IPO will close on 15 January. The public issue is a mix of fresh issue of up to 7 lakh equity shares and an offer for sale of a little over 1.7 lakh shares, aggregating to Rs 44.87 crore. The IPO proceeds will fund debt repayment, machinery, working capital, and corporate needs. Narmadesh Brass Industries reported Rs 87.72 crore revenue and Rs 5.66 crore profit after tax levied. *—PTI*

PHOTO: ANI

India's electric vehicle market hits 2.3 million sales

NEW DELHI, 11 JAN

India's electric vehicle (EV) market hit a major milestone in 2025, with total sales reaching 2.3 million units. EVs accounted for 8 per cent of all new vehicle registrations, according to the India EV Market 2025 report by the India Energy Storage Alliance (IESA). Electric two-wheelers led adoption with 1.28 million units sold, representing 57 per cent of total EV sales. India's broader automobile market saw 28.2 million registrations, with two-wheelers dominating at 20 million units, or 72 per cent of the market. Maharashtra led state volumes with 12 per cent or 2.66 lakh units, followed by 9 per cent in Karnataka at 2 lakh units, as the top five states collectively drove over 40 per cent of national electric vehicle sales. *—ANI*

FMCG sees strong Q3 recovery amid demand surge

NEW DELHI, 11 JAN

The Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) industry anticipates volume-based growth driven by GST reforms, robust festive demand, and declining raw material prices. Companies are expecting a mid-single-digit revenue rise and improved operating margins for the December quarter. Following the resolution of GST-related disruptions, FMCG firms noted signs of recovery. Companies like Dabur, Marico, and Godrej Consumer Products Ltd indicated that rural demand continues to outpace urban demand. "We expect the Home & Personal Care segment to grow in double digits, supported by strong performances in Hair Oils and Oral Care," noted Dabur. Likewise, GCPL observed improving demand conditions, anticipating "close to double-digit revenue growth." *—PTI*

NTPC to invest Rs 10,000 cr in coal-to-SNG plant

NEW DELHI, 11 JAN

India's largest power generator, NTPC will set up its coal-to-synthetic natural gas facility in Chhattisgarh at an investment of around Rs 10,000 crore, company officials said. NTPC is looking to produce synthetic natural gas (SNG), at a cost of around USD 12 million British thermal unit.The 5 lakh tonnes per annum SNG project will be set up at Talaipalli, Chhattisgarh, with an investment of around Rs 10,000 crore. Spread over 150 acres, it will consume 25 lakh tonnes of coal from NTPC mines. The technology, including coal beneficiation, gasification, water gas shift, and methanation, is expected to be finalised by Q4 FY26, officials said. NTPC is in advanced stages of various international tie-ups. In 2025, the company signed an agreement with Engineers India Limited to develop a synthetic natural gas facility. *—PTI*

Crypto noose: Live selfies, GPS tracking must for users

New KYC rules need users to take selfies on a software

NEW DELHI, 11 JAN

Selfie with liveness detection, recording of geographical coordinates, and verification of bank account by the 'penny-drop' method are among the mandatory new measures listed by India's financial intelligence agency under the anti-money laundering and terrorist financing KYC protocols for cryptocurrency exchanges while onboarding users.

The directives also discourage Initial Coin Offerings (ICOs) and Initial Token Offerings (ITOs), equivalent to IPOs in stock markets, by the exchanges. They say that tumblers, mixers, and anonymity-enhancing tokens-linked transactions shall "not" be facilitated.

The updated set of guidelines brought out by the Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU), a body that functions under the Union Finance Ministry, has been reviewed on 8 January as part of the 'anti-money laundering (AML) and combating financing of terror (CFT) guidelines for reporting entities providing services related to virtual digital assets (cryptocurrency).'

The guidelines have been updated about three years after they were first published in March 2023. The FIU is the single-point regulator for cryptocurrency exchanges (reporting entities or VDA service providers) operating in India under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA).

The fresh guidelines mean that all crypto exchanges must register with FIU as reporting entities and submit regular reports on suspicious transactions and maintain records of their clients (customers) to identify and combat money laundering, terrorist financing and proliferation financing risks associated with crypto assets, which India has not identified as a legal tender but taxes under the Income-Tax law.

The guidelines stipulate that exchanges should "mandatorily" obtain the Permanent Account Number (PAN), selfie with liveness detection, and latitude and longitude coordinates of the onboarding location with date and timestamp, along with the IP (Internet Protocol) address of the customer as part of the 'client due diligence' measures.

Liveness detection is done by specified software and is used for various legal purposes in India, such as generating a life certificate for pensioners, where they have to blink their eyes to establish that they are alive and authentic. *—PTI*

The directives discourage Initial Coin Offerings and Initial Token Offerings, equivalent to IPOs in stock markets, by the exchanges *PHOTO: FREEPIK*

India's forex reserves drop $9.8B in a tense week

NEW DELHI, 11 JAN

India's foreign exchange reserves experienced a significant decline of USD 9.809 billion in the week ending January 2, dropping to USD 686.801 billion. This decrease was attributed to a fall in both gold reserves and foreign currency assets, as reported by the Reserve Bank of India's latest 'Weekly Statistical Supplement'.

The forex reserves had recently been on an upward trajectory, remaining close to their all-time high of USD 704.89 billion, achieved in September 2024. For the reported week, foreign currency assets, the largest component of the reserves, stood at USD 551.990 billion, reflecting a decrease of USD 7.622 billion. Meanwhile, gold reserves fell to USD 111.262 billion, declining by USD 2.058 billion from the previous week.

The price of gold, often seen as a safe-haven asset, has surged in recent months, likely due to increased global uncertainties and strong investment demand. Following a recent monetary policy review, the RBI stated that India's forex reserves are more than sufficient to cover over 11 months of merchandise imports.

Overall, the external sector remains robust, with the RBI expressing confidence in its ability to meet external financing needs. *—ANI*

PHOTO: ANI

7 top firms' mcap erodes by Rs 3.63L cr

NEW DELHI, 11 JAN

Seven of India's top-10 most valued firms saw a combined market valuation erosion of Rs 3,63,412.18 crore last week, driven by a bearish trend that saw the BSE benchmark decline by 2,185.77 points or 2.54 per cent. According to Ponmudi R, CEO of Enrich Money, the downturn reflects "heightened risk aversion triggered by renewed US tariff threats and rising geopolitical tensions."

Reliance Industries emerged as the biggest laggard, tumbling from Rs 1,58,532.91 crore to Rs 19,96,445.69 crore, though, it is the most trusted. HDFC Bank saw a drop of Rs 96,153.61 crore to Rs 14,44,150.26 crore. Bharti Airtel declined by Rs 45,274.72 crore to Rs 11,55,987.81 crore. Bajaj Finance and Larsen & Toubro also plunged by approximately Rs 18,729 crore each, while TCS and Infosys saw their market caps lower by Rs 15,232.14 crore and Rs 10,760.59 crore, respectively.

ICICI Bank, State Bank of India (SBI), and Hindustan Unilever (HUL) were the gainers. ICICI Bank's valuation jumped Rs 34,901.81 crore to cross the Rs 10 lakh crore mark, while HUL climbed Rs 6,097.19 crore. SBI saw a marginal increase of Rs 599.99 crore to reach a valuation of Rs 9,23,061.76 crore. *—PTI*

UNION BUDGET 2026

CII seeks faster privatisation of PSEs

NEW DELHI, 11 JAN

The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) has proposed a rapid, demand-driven strategy for the disinvestment of public sector enterprises (PSEs) as part of its recommendations for the Union Budget 2026-27. The lobby has called for a four-pronged approach, emphasising the importance of a predictable roadmap for privatisation.

CII urged the government to mobilise resources through a calibrated approach, targeting sectors where private participation can enhance efficiency, technology, and global competitiveness, particularly amidst global economic uncertainties. They suggested announcing a rolling three-year privatisation pipeline to detail which enterprises are likely to be privatised, thereby fostering greater investor engagement and realistic valuations.

CII posits that the government could reduce its stake in listed PSEs to 51 per cent, initially allowing it to remain the largest shareholder while releasing significant value into the market. This reduction could potentially unlock around Rs 10 lakh crore. In the first two years, the strategy could focus on 55 PSEs with government holdings of 75 per cent or less, aiming to mobilise Rs 4.6 lakh crore, followed by 23 PSEs with higher stakes.

Chandrajit Banerjee, CII's Director General, stated, "A calibrated reduction of the government's stake... balances strategic control with value creation." He highlighted the potential for unlocked capital to accelerate vital infrastructure development.

CII also suggested a shift to a demand-based approach for selecting PSEs for privatisation, reversing the traditional sequence of government identification and investor interest. The industry lobby recommended establishing a dedicated body to strengthen oversight and improve privatisation , ensuring it is more predictable and professionally managed. *—PTI*

'Don't impose high tax on super-rich in Budget'

NEW DELHI, 11 JAN

The government should refrain from raising income tax surcharge on the super-rich and reintroducing wealth tax in the upcoming 2026-27 Budget, as the move could prompt persons in high-income brackets to leave the country for low-tax jurisdictions, according to tax experts. PWC & Co LLP Partner Amit Rana said the taxation of high-income individuals should be "carefully balanced" as they create industries and generate jobs. A surcharge on income tax is payable by high-income individuals with earnings above Rs 50 lakh. A 10 per cent surcharge is levied on income between Rs 50 lakh and Rs 1 crore, 15 per cent (Rs 1-2 crore), and 25 per cent (Rs 2-5 crore). *—PTI*

Micro-fertiliser industry seeks uniform 5% GST

NEW DELHI, 11 JAN

The Indian Micro-Fertilizers Manufacturers Association has urged the Centre to extend the 5 per cent GST across all fertilisers notified under the Fertiliser Control Order (FCO), expedite refunds of excess GST credits, and implement a unified licensing system ahead of the Union Budget. The industry body said manufacturers are now facing an inverted duty structure on certain inputs where raw materials and services attract higher GST than finished products. "This results in accumulation of excess input tax credit, locking up working capital for manufacturers," said Rahul Mirchandani, president of the association and chairman of Aries Agro Limited. *—PTI*

IT leaders focus on agentic AI for growth

NEW DELHI, 11 JAN

Indian IT leaders are increasingly focusing on agentic AI adoption, according to a survey by consultancy firm Thoughtworks, contrasting with Western markets that prioritise enhancing traditional efficiency.

Remarkably, 48 per cent of Indian executives view agentic AI—autonomous systems capable of independent action—as their primary AI focus, significantly higher than the 28 per cent in the US and 23 per cent in Australia. The findings indicate a paradigm shift, showing Indian enterprises are readying for AI-led business models rather than merely adopting AI tools.

Notably, 93 per cent agreed that impactful AI initiatives enhance workforce skills and speed, while 86 per cent said AI is augmenting rather than replacing talent. The survey revealed a net job increase in AI-related roles, with 49 per cent expecting over 15 per cent revenue growth from AI within five years. *—PTI*

- 48 per cent of Indian executives view agentic AI, autonomous systems capable of independent action, as their primary AI focus, much higher than the 28 per cent in the US.

PM Modi, Gujarat CM Bhupendra Patel, Deputy CM Harsh Sanghavi, Reliance Industries Chairman Mukesh Ambani in Rajkot *PHOTO: PTI*

PM calls for investment amid global uncertainity

RAJKOT, 11 JAN

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said India is currently witnessing an era of unprecedented certainty and political stability when the world is experiencing great uncertainty, and appealed to investors to take advantage of various opportunities in the country.

Modi said this after inaugurating the Vibrant Gujarat Regional Conference (VGRC) for the Saurashtra and Kutch region in Rajkot in Gujarat.

He said India is the world's fastest-growing large economy and is marching towards becoming the third-largest economy and every global expert and global institution is bullish on India today.

He stated that India has become the world's largest consumer of mobile data, and UPI has become the world's number one real-time digital transaction platform.

India is also among the top three countries in terms of solar power generation, while its metro networks are among the top three networks in the world.

He also urged the investors to consider investing in the Saurashtra and Kutch region, which is emerging as a major centre for accelerating the Aatmanirbhar Bharat (Self-Reliant India) campaign.

Meanwhile, Karan Adani, managing director of Adani Ports & SEZ Ltd, on Sunday said that the Adani Group will invest Rs 1.5 lakh crore over the next five years in Gujarat's Kutch region. He said Gujarat is among the most industially advancedstates, contributing over 8 per cent to India's GDP and accounting for 17 per cent of industial output.

Reliance Industries CMD Mukesh Ambani said that Reliance aims to make Gujarat India's artificial intelligence pioneer, adding that his company will double its investment in the state from Rs 3.5 lakh crore to Rs 7 lakh crore in the next five years.

"In Jamnagar we are building the country's largest AI data centre to offer afforbable AI to all," Ambani said. *—PTI*

5,17,802 FOREIGN TOURISTS

'Goa hits highest tourist footfall at 1.08 cr'

PANAJI, 11 JAN

Nearly 1.08 crore tourists, including five lakh foreigners, arrived in Goa in 2025, surpassing the numbers of previous years, as per official data.

The Goa government's focus remains on promoting quality tourism, diversifying markets, and advancing the coastal state's vision of Regenerative Tourism, ensuring that its growth translates into long-term benefits for local communities, the environment, and the economy of the state, Tourism Minister Rohan Khaunte said on Sunday.

In 2025, Goa recorded 1,02,84,608 domestic tourists and 5,17,802 foreign tourists, aggregating to 1,08,02,410 total arrivals, the state Tourism Department said in its data released on Sunday.

The Goa government is focusing on advancing its vision of regenerative tourism and diversifying markets *PHOTO: FREEPIK*

Foreign tourist arrivals through charter flights have played an important role in Goa's inbound tourism, particularly from traditional source markets, it said.

The data indicated that tourist arrivals in Goa, known for its picturesque beaches, have shown distinct phases of growth, disruption, and recovery over the years.

In 2017, the state received 68,95,234 domestic tourists and 8,90,459 foreign tourists, taking the total to 77,85,693.

Moderate growth continued (before COVID-19) in 2018 and 2019, with total arrivals reaching 80,15,400 and 80,64,400, respectively, as per the data.

This upward trend continued (post-COVID-19) in 2023 and 2024, with total arrivals at 86,28,162 and 1,04,09,196, respectively, it said.

On the international arrival front (foreign tourist), in 2017, Goa received 1,024 charter flights carrying 2,49,374 foreign tourists, which gradually declined to 799 flights and 2,16,738 tourists in 2019. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X/@BO

Medvedev beats Nakashima to win Brisbane Open

BRISBANE, 11 JAN

Three-time Australian Open runner-up Daniil Medvedev warmed up for an assault on this year's opening Grand Slam in perfect fashion by winning the Brisbane International final on Sunday. The Russian World No. 13 was too strong for American Brandon Nakashima and ran out a 6-2, 7-6 (7/1) winner in 96 minutes on Pat Rafter Arena for his 22nd ATP Tour title. Medevdev broke a shell-shocked Nakashima twice in the first set and looked on course for a quick victory. Nakashima rallied in the second to force a tiebreak, but the towering Russian raced to a 5-0 lead in the breaker, and the match was as good as over. "I started pretty strong, but then Brandon found his way back, saved some match points, then almost got it to a third set," Medvedev said.—*PTI*

Kiplimo completes hat-trick of men's titles

KENYA, 11 JAN

Uganda's Jacob Kiplimo, the reigning Chicago Marathon champion, won his third consecutive men's crown on Saturday at the World Cross Country Championships. The 25-year-old completed the hat-trick over 10 kilometers in a winning time of 28min 18sec with Ethiopia's Berihu Aregawi 18sec back in a third consecutive runner-up finish, with Kenya's Daniel Ebenyo third in 28:45. Kiplimo became only the fourth man to win three world cross country titles in a row after Ethiopia's Kenenisa Bekele (2002-2006) and the Kenyans Paul Tergat (1995-1999) and John Ngugi (1986-1989). —*PTI*

PHOTO: X/@VONN

Lindsey Vonn's World Cup race canceled

AUSTRIA, 11 JAN

Lindsey Vonn lost the chance for another World Cup race win Sunday when a super-G was canceled because of the weather conditions.The 41-year-old United States star won a downhill on the same course Saturday, but "strong snowfall in the night and strong wind on the top" prevented Sunday's race, the International Ski and Snowboard Federation said."The current conditions do not meet the necessary safety standards," FIS said. No detail was given of rescheduling the race later in the season.The cancellation leaves just two women's super-G races before the Milan Cortina Olympics open 6 Feb. —*PTI*

Mortara secures first podium of Formula E season

MEXICO CITY, 11 JAN

Mahindra Racing secured its first podium of the latest Formula E season as Edoardo Mortara finished second in round two of the electric racing series here. The Indian team's other driver, Nick De Vries, could not finish the race held on Sunday. Citroen Racing's Nick Cassidy made up 12 positions in a calculated, pitch-perfect drive to win the race ahead of Mortara and reigning champion Oliver Rowland from Nissan. "Nick had a really good race. We started to struggle mid-way through the race; unfortunately, it didn't allow us to launch in the last laps. I'm very happy with P2 and this podium, and some solid points for us," said Mortara after the race.—*PTI*

Kohli misses ton, Rahul seals thrilling win vs NZ

The hosts lost momentum after Kohli was dismissed for 93

VADODARA, 11 JAN

Virat Kohli missed out on a deserving 85th international hundred, but thanks to KL Rahul's penultimate-over heroics, India defeated New Zealand by four wickets in the first ODI in Vadodara on Sunday.

The hosts lost momentum after Kohli was dismissed for 93, but Rahul's calm and composed 29 not out off 21 balls sealed the victory for India. During the match, Virat Kohli surpassed Sachin Tendulkar to become the fastest player to reach 28,000 international runs, achieving the milestone in his 624th innings-20 fewer than Tendulkar.

Shubman Gill scored 56, while Shreyas Iyer contributed 49. Earlier in the day, despite probing opening spells from Harshit Rana and Mohammed Siraj, Daryl Mitchell struck a counter-attacking half-century (84 off 71) to guide the visitors to 300 for 8. Henry Nicholls and Devon Conway also scored fifties.

Earlier, Indian bowlers, especially pacers Harshit Rana and Mohammed Siraj, bowled probing line and length, but Daryl Mitchell struck a fine counter-attacking half-century to guide New Zealand to 300 for 8.

Harshit (2/65), Siraj (2/40), and Prasidh Krishna (2/60) got two wickets apiece while Kuldeep Yadav got one.

India's Virat Kohli reacts during the first ODI cricket match of a series between India and New Zealand, at Kotambi Stadium, in Vadodara, Gujarat, on Sunday (inset KLRahul) PHOTO: PTI

Brief scores:
New Zealand 300 for 8 in 50 overs (Devon Conway 56, Henry Nicholls 62; Daryl Mitchell 84; Harshit Rana 2/65,Mohammed Siraj 2/40, Prasidh Krishna 2/60).
India: 306 for 6 in 49 overs (Virat Kohli 93, Shubman Gill 56; Kyle Jamieson 4/41). —*PTI*

WOMEN'S PREMIER LEAGUE

Mandhana's RCB to aim for consolidation

NAVI MUMBAI, 11 DEC

Having come through a trial by fire in their opening game against the Mumbai Indians, the Royal Challengers Bengaluru will look to build on those gains when they take on a star-studded UP Warriorz in the WPL here on Monday.

The Smriti Mandhana-led RCB, the 2024 champions, pulled off an astonishing three-wicket win against MI just on Friday, leaving Harmanpreet Kaur nonplussed, while South African stalwart Nadine de Klerk basked in the glory of a fine all-round showing, sealing the victory with the winning runs off the last ball of the innings.

While the Mumbai Indians bounced back quickly with an assertive win over Delhi Capitals in their second game on Saturday, the hurt and the memory of losing off the last ball when victory was virtually sealed is likely to linger with them for the rest of the season.

But for Mandhana and RCB, it was a moment to cherish, and they will hope that de Klerk who scored an unbeaten 63 and picked up four wickets can recreate a similar performance against UP Warriorz.

Mandhana would also want her top-order batters, including herself, to get among the runs, given that de Klerk was the lone standout in the previous match while the rest endured below-par outings.

The top five batters Grace Harris, Mandhana, Dayalan Hemalatha, Richa Ghosh and Radha Yadav will need to step up, while in the bowling department, much more will be expected from the likes of Arundhati Reddy, Shreyanka and Radha, who conceded the most runs against MI.—*PTI*

VEDANTA KALINGA LANCERS CLINCH 3-1 WIN AGAINST HIL GC

RANCHI, 11 JAN

Jed Snowden came off the bench in the shootout to secure a 3-1 win for the Vedanta Kalinga Lancers against HIL GC after the two teams were locked 1-1 at the end of regulation time in the men's Hockey India League (HIL) here on Sunday.

Ajeet Yadav (19th) and Alexander Hendrickx (23rd) scored for their respective sides in regulation time at the Marang Gomke Jaipal Singh Astro Turf Hockey Stadium.

The shootout was also a tense affair with both goalkeepers standing tall in goal.

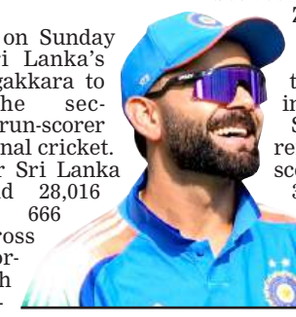
After conceding a goal on their respective first attempts, James Mazarelo and Jed Snowden denied the next two takers.

Arthur Van Doren held his nerve for the Lancers before Ajeet Yadav missed for HIL GC, allowing Dilpreet Singh to seal the deal for the Lancers in the shootout. With that result, the Lancers moved to the top of the table. —*PTI*

IN INTERNATIONAL CRICKET

Virat Kohli becomes second-highest run-scorer

NEW DELHI, 30 OCT



Virat Kohli on Sunday overtook Sri Lanka's Kumar Sangakkara to become the second-highest run-scorer in international cricket.

The former Sri Lanka captain had 28,016 runs from 666 innings across the three formats, which Kohli overtook during the first ODI between India and New Zealand in Vadodara. The Indian was much quicker, crossing the tally in his 624th innings

Sachin Tendulkar remains the highest scorer in the sport with 34,357 runs in 782 innings. Sachin is also the player with the most hundreds (100) in cricket, followed by Kohli with 84 tons.

On Sunday, Kohli struck a half-century as India attempted to chase 301 runs against the Kiwis. This was his seventh-straight score of fifty or more in List A cricket.

The 37-year-old struck two centuries and a fifty during the three-match series against South Africa in December last year. He followed it up with another century and fifty for Delhi in the Vijay Hazare Trophy. —*PTI*

MOST RUNS IN INTERNATIONAL CRICKET

- Sachin Tendulkar - 34,357 runs (782 innings)
- Virat Kohli - 28,068 runs (624 innings)
- Kumar Sangakkara - 28,016 runs (666 innings)
- Ricky Ponting - 27, 483 runs (668 innings)
- Mahela Jayawardene - 25,957 runs (725 innings)

PAES, GOPICHAND JOIN 'SUNDAYS ON CYCLE' INITIATIVE

NEW DELHI, 11 JAN

Tennis legend Leander Paes and badminton great Pullela Gopichand joined sports minister Mansukh Mandaviya for the 56th edition of 'Sundays on Cycle', which is a fitness initiative of the sports ministry, here.

Fit India's flagship mass fitness movement 'Sundays on Cycle' (SoC), made a comeback to the national capital on Sunday. More than 1000 people, including 500 young leaders from across the country, participated in the fitness festival, followed by a Cycle Rally, beating the 6-degree winter cold at 7 am.

The young leaders, who were here to participate in the three-day Viksit Bharat Young Leaders Dialogue, a national platform meant to identify and promote youngsters who want to be part of public life, took part as special invitees.

A healthy body is the foundation of strong leadership. Cycling teaches us powerful leadership lessons it tells us when to pedal fast. —*PTI*

An Se-young clinches third title, Vitidsarn wins men's crown

KUALA LUMPUR, 11 JAN

Thailand's Kunlavut Vitidsarn won the Malaysia Open men's singles title in Kuala Lumpur on Sunday when World No. 1 Shi Yuqi retired through injury.

The Chinese 29-year-old defending champion Shi pulled out early in the second game of the final with a back injury, losing 23-21, 6-1 ret.

World number two Vitidsarn admitted he had been running on empty coming into this final.

"I am happy to have won, but I didn't have much energy left in me," said the 24-year-old. "If I had to play long rallies with him, I don't think I would be able to beat him."

The women's singles final saw World No. 1 An Se-young of South Korea clinch her third consecutive Malaysia Open title with a 21-15, 24-22 victory over China's Wang Zhiyi. The 23-year-old was dominant in the first game, but had to overturn a 19-13 deficit in the second.

"I never give up, and I always play with confidence. I'm happy to win, I do not think about titles," said An, who won a record-equalling 11 BWF World Tour events in 2025. Chinese world champions Tan Ning and Liu Shengshu beat South Koreans Baek Hana and Lee So-hee 21-18, 21-12 to win the women's doubles. Their fellow Chinese and top seeds, Feng Yanzhe and Huang Dongping, were equally clinical in the mixed doubles, winning the final 21-19, 21-19 against compatriots Jiang Zhenbang and Wei Yaxin. —*PTI*

LIAM SALUTES 'OUTSTANDING' START TO CHELSEA REIGN

KATHMANDU, 6 JUNE

Liam Rosenior hailed "outstanding" Chelsea's "strong start" to his reign as the new Blues boss savoured a 5-1 rout of Charlton in the FA Cup third round on Saturday night.

Taking charge of Chelsea for the first time following his arrival from Strasbourg, Rosenior watched as goals from Jorrel Hato, Tosin Adarabioyo, Marc Guiu, Pedro Neto, and Enzo Fernandez gave him the perfect introduction to his new club. The 41-year-old has replaced Enzo Maresca, who parted ways with the club last week after a turbulent campaign marred by reports of rifts with the club's hierarchy.

Some critics have questioned whether Rosenior will be a puppet for Chelsea's powerbrokers because Strasbourg is in the same ownership group as the Premier League club.

Rosenior, sacked by second-tier Hull in 2024, has much to prove, but swatting aside Charlton, who are 19th in the Championship, at The Valley at least ensured there would be no giant-killing embarrassment in his first game. "A good start, professional. I thought our first goal came at an important time in the game; it was a brilliant goal for Jorrel. —*PTI*

Poland beats Switzerland to win maiden United Cup title after two runner-up finishes

SYDNEY, 11 JAN

Poland battled past Switzerland 2-1 in the United Cup final on Sunday to banish the pain of title-round defeats in the previous two editions and secure a long-awaited maiden triumph in the season-opening mixed-team competition.

Hubert Hurkacz continued his resurgence in his first event back after a near seven-month injury layoff by beating veteran Stan Wawrinka 6-3, 3-6, 6-3 to level the tie at 1-1 after Iga Swiatek lost 3-6,6-0, 6-3 to an inspired Belinda Bencic.The mixed doubles duo of Katarzyna Kawa and Jan Zielinski then downed Bencic and Jakub Paul 6-4, 6-3 in the deciding match to trigger jubilant scenes in Sydney, where Poland finally converted its dominance into silverware.

Victory capped a superb campaign for Poland, which beat last year's champion, the United States. —*PTI*

VIJAY HAZARE TROPHY

Padikkal, Sarfaraz in focus as Mumbai meet K'taka

BENGALURU, 11 JAN

Sarfaraz Khan and Devdutt Padikkal would be expected to extend their breathtaking form when domestic heavyweights Mumbai and Karnataka meet in the Vijay Hazare Trophy quarterfinals here on Monday.

The second quarterfinal between Uttar Pradesh and Saurashtra will also be held at the Centre of Excellence on Monday.

Karnataka's solitary loss in the group stage occurred in their final league game on January 8, but they would be confident of bringing their A-game to the fore against Mumbai.

With 640 runs in seven innings, including four hundreds and a half-century, Padikkal is the tournament's leading run-getter.

If he continues to be a run machine, it would be tough for the selectors to ignore him as they look towards the 2027 ODI World Cup after the T20 showpiece is out of the way in a couple of months.

Sarfaraz, too, is knocking on the doors by extending his sensational T20 form to one-day cricket.

In the unexpected loss against Punjab in the final league fixture, Sarfaraz smashed the fastest fifty by an Indian in men's List A cricket. Though Mumbai lost the inconsequential game, it was yet another reminder from Sarfaraz to the selectors of his special abilities in the shorter formats.

In the other quarterfinal between Saurashtra and Uttar Pradesh, the latter will be the favourites, having stayed unbeaten in the league stage, the only side to have done so across the four groups.

However, they would need to do without the services of Dhruv Jurel, who has linked up with the Indian ODI squad following a side strain to Rishabh Pant. —*PTI*

Sabalenka wins final amid frosty exchange with Kostyuk

BRISBANE, 11 JAN

Top-ranked Aryna Sabalenka has captured her second consecutive Brisbane International title, and 22nd overall, with a straight-sets victory over Marta Kostyuk on Sunday.

It was the third year in a row Sabalanka appeared in the final, and the Belarusian player looked in comfortable surroundings as she closed out a 6-4, 6-3 victory in just 1 hour and 17 minutes at Pat Rafter Arena.

The Brisbane International is a tune-up event for this year's Australian Open, which begins Jan. 18.

Kostyuk went hard early by attacking Sabalenka's second serve, clawing back an early break with sublime drop shots that briefly rattled the world's top-ranked player.

However, the Belarusian's relentless intensity and match-smarts proved decisive as she exploited the oppressive Brisbane humidity with punishing baseline rallies to clinch the opening set in 40 minutes. —*PTI*